DUMITRU STANILOAE

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

ORTHODOX DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

VOLUME 6

THE FULFILLMENT OF CREATION

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Orthodox Dogmatic Theology
Volume 6

THE FULFILLMENT OF CREATION

Translated and Edited by
Ioan Ionita

Foreword by
Metropolitan KALLISTOS (Ware) of Diokleia

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FOREWORD

With the publication of the sixth volume of *The Experience of God*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press has brought to completion a project begun in 1994: the integral translation into English of the *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* by Archpriest Dumitru Staniloae (1903–93). The original Romanian text, published in 1978, was divided into three volumes, but for reasons of convenience the editors of the English version have chosen to divide each of the three volumes into two.

Fr. Dumitru was a fluent and prolific author, but among his many writings it is undoubtedly the *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* that constitutes his masterwork. The foremost theologian in the history of Romanian Orthodoxy—indeed, so many would claim, the greatest Orthodox theologian in the second half of the twentieth century—Fr. Dumitru has inspired a whole new school of younger Romanian theologians who see themselves as, directly or indirectly, his disciples. Since his death twenty years ago, his influence has steadily increased. More impressive, however, than the depth of his thought was the way in which there was for him no division between his creative thinking and his daily life. Theology was in his eyes not a specialized academic pursuit but a total vocation. All who knew him will recall, as I do, his Christian love, his warmth, his gentleness, and his generosity of spirit.[1]

This sixth and final volume of *The Experience of God* has as its subject what in Western theology are termed "the four last things": death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Following the normal Orthodox teaching, Fr. Dumitru makes a clear distinction between the particular and the general judgment: that is, between the individual judgment that takes place at the death of each person, and the universal judgment occurring at the Second Coming of Christ. Until the Second Coming there prevails a certain fluidity, and it is possible for souls to be released from hell; but after the universal judgment all is fixed for eternity, and no such release is possible. Once more in accordance with the standard teaching of Orthodoxy, Fr. Dumitru holds that, until the Second Coming, the saints in heaven do not as yet enjoy the completeness of beatitude, nor do those condemned to hell undergo the fullness of torment; this only comes to pass at the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. This was one of the points debated between Orthodox and Roman Catholics at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–39).

Adopting an antinomic stance, Fr. Dumitru maintains that, for each one of us, this present life is the time of decisive choice, and yet at the same time there is progress after death. "Holy Scripture," he writes, "shows that life on earth is the arena in which the human person decides his fate for eternity, for after death he cannot change his fate" (30).[2] He goes on to quote St. John of Damascus: "When the market day is over, there is no more trading for goods" (31). For this reason he firmly repudiates any possibility of reincarnation, for that would undermine the definitive significance of our present life.

After death, however, although there can be no fundamental change, there is a "growth in communion with God" (84), a "progressive perfection" (224n15). Indeed, even after the Second Coming, this growth and progress continue without interruption throughout the ages of ages. Just as God's being is limitless, so also our human participation in the divine life never ceases to increase. Our deification (*theosis*) is "endless," for we have "an infinite capacity to delight in an infinite gift" (225n17). By virtue of communion with God, the human person enjoys "an unceasing and unending newness" (37). Here Fr. Dumitru clearly endorses the notion of *epektasis*, or "unending progress," upheld in particular by St. Gregory of Nyssa. The transfigured cosmos in which the blessed will dwell in the age to come "will be wholly and perfectly familiar, yet still inexhaustible" (159). It is possible to speak in this sense of "continual creation" throughout all eternity (200).

Once more antinomic in his standpoint, Fr. Dumitru emphasizes the supremacy of divine love, quoting Dostoyevsky: "Love is the crown of existence" (23). Yet on the other hand he rejects universalism, with its belief that in the end all will inevitably be saved, for this would be to depreciate human freedom. In somber terms he asserts the everlasting character of hell, the possibility of an "eternally unhappy life" (2). Hell is "a totally lucid madness," in which a person can see in others only "the face of Satan" (207–8). Yet the torments endured by those in hell are not a punishment imposed by God from the outside, but they are self-inflicted; the damned do not *want* to come out of hell. "He who departs this life hardened or 'dead' will be hardened for eternity. The movement in him will be a movement by which he eats himself up inside; he will be his own sleepless worm" (64). God's glory, which the righteous experience as "a light of love," is experienced by those who did not know Him as "a consuming fire" (185). Much of this calls to mind the approach of C. S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*.

As well as denying universalism, Fr. Dumitru repudiates the theory of conditional immortality, according to which it is only the righteous who enjoy eternal life, whereas the wicked simply cease to exist. Against this view, he insists that each human person is "a unique sign of the creative imagination of God" (27), distinctive and unrepeatable, and this personal diversity will continue without end in the age to come. In His act of creating each unique person, God has established an eternal relationship with each one, and so no single person will ever pass out of existence. "Only objects are dissolved into nothing. Persons remain indestructible as unique, original entities" (26).

Such are the theological parameters within which Fr. Dumitru develops his vision of "the fulfilment of creation." Taken as a whole, the sixth volume of *The Experience of God* is marked by four dominant themes: resurrection, mystery, cosmic transfiguration, and personal communion. Let us look at each of these in turn.

(1) *Resurrection*. As Fr. Dumitru stated in a lecture given at Oxford during his first visit to England in 1969, "The deepest foundation of the hope and joy which characterize Orthodoxy and which penetrate all its worship is the resurrection. Easter, the centre of Orthodox worship, is an explosion of joy, the same joy which the disciples felt when they saw the risen Saviour. It is the explosion of cosmic joy at the triumph of life, after the overwhelming sorrow over death."[3] This "explosion" illumines the whole of the present volume. The event of Christ's Resurrection defines the relationship between the present life and the life

to come. Death has been swallowed up in resurrection. Fr. Dumitru is here in full agreement with the nineteenth-century Russian missionary St. Makary Glukharov, who said of the risen Savior: "In Him we live and move and have our being. Whether alive or dead, we are all in Him. It would be more true to say: We are all alive in Him, for in Him there is no death."[4]

This unshakeable faith in the resurrection—in the conclusive victory of life over death—confers on Fr. Dumitru's understanding of the last things a resounding note of hope. "I am expecting the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come": so the Creed ends, precisely with an affirmation of strong hopefulness. Whereas earlier in the Creed we say, "I believe" or "I confess," it is significant that when we come to speak about the life after death, we say, "I await," "I look forward to," "I am expecting."

It is exactly this attitude of eager expectation that marks Fr. Dumitru's treatment of death. He does not deny that, from one point of view, death is to be regarded in negative terms as a tragic reversal, something contrary to nature, the consequence of sin. Yet he also sees our death as a positive reality that gives purpose and value to our life. Death is "the gate through which we pass toward full meaning" (3), "a helpful presence" throughout our entire life, which comes, in Karl Rahner's phrase, as an "act of fulfilment" (10). It is not just a misfortune to which we passively surrender, but a fresh beginning that we actively embrace in a spirit of expectation and hope, knowing, as we depart from the present world, that the risen Christ stands waiting for us "with arms open" (63).

(2) *Mystery*. Fr. Dumitru is an apophatic theologian who underlines the element of mystery in all our religious experience. "God is infinite and incomprehensible," he writes, quoting St. Symeon the New Theologian (178). Characteristically, he speaks of the "mystery" of our personhood and the closely related "mystery" of our human freedom. But, more specifically in this sixth volume, he stresses that *everything* beyond the threshold of death is "shrouded in the deepest mystery" (149). Our condition in the next world will be radically different from anything that we now know, and at the same time "unimaginably" richer (24). The event of death is itself a profound mystery, as also is the nature of the resurrection body, and the fact that some are released from hell whereas others are not. God has revealed to us enough about

the future to serve as guidance for the present, but for the time being there are unavoidable limits to our knowledge that we are bound to respect. Appropriately, Fr. Dumitru quotes St. Paul: "We see in a mirror and obscurely" (1 Cor 13:12).

(3) *Cosmic transfiguration*. In his interpretation of the age to come, as in every aspect of his theology, Fr. Dumitru is cosmic in his vision, holistic and all-embracing. Faithful to the standpoint of Romans 8:18–23, he believes that the redemption of humankind will involve also the transfiguration of the created order in its entirety. We humans are awaiting a "generalized Tabor" (152), for we are to be saved not *from* the world but *with* the world. The human person is an integral unity of body and soul; moreover, it is not the human body alone but the material realm as a whole that is called to participate in the glory of the Spirit. He goes so far as to speak of "mystical materialism" and "holy matter" (171). He is sensitive to the salvific value of beauty in all its different manifestations: in the world of nature, in the holy icons, in art, in poetry and music. Quoting Fr. Sergei Bulgakov, he calls beauty "a perceptible ladder between heaven and earth" (158). "Eternal happiness," he affirms, "will consist of beauty" (171).

(4) *Personal communion*. Fr. Dumitru is a convinced personalist. He insists upon "the superiority of the person vis-à-vis nature" (150), agreeing here with the Greek thinkers Christos Yannaras and Metropolitan John Zizioulas. Inspired by this personalism, he upholds a theological stance that is experiential and existential (although he has reservations about existentialism as a philosophical school). What distinguishes the person, in his understanding, is the capacity for communion and love. "The human face," he writes, "is a face of communion" (111); "the one who loves is actualized as an image of God, as a true man" (186). Created in the image of the Triune God, we humans have as our vocation to express on earth the eternal movement of love, the *perichoresis*, that passes unceasingly in heaven between the three members of the Holy Trinity. Only through communion and love do we become what we truly are.

All of this applies to the last things. Hell is precisely self-isolation, the loss of interpersonal communion. Fr. Dumitru is of the same mind as Georges Bernanos: "Hell is not to love any more." As St. Isaac the Syrian appreciated, those in hell are tormented by the "scourge of love" (219n31). Agreeing once more with St. Isaac, Fr. Dumitru holds that "salvation is not a matter of justice, but of love" (89). He rejects any suggestion that God is vengeful or vindictive. Legalistic categories such as "external justification" and "satisfaction" are not applicable to Christ's work of salvation.

United with the Triune God, who is Himself a communion of persons, we humans are through Him brought into communion with one another. As St. Symeon the New Theologian asserts, the Kingdom of Heaven is "a single great hearth" (156). Quoting Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and stressing the essential joyfulness of interpersonal communion, Fr. Dumitru affirms that our meeting with one another in Christ takes the form of a "festival" (78). In this connection he uses the striking image of God as "the central power station": "God binds us to Himself so that through Himself He may bind us to others. He is the central power station to which all the wires that carry the current (that is, life) lead and from which all start" (97). Electrified by this central power station that is God, each of us belongs to all the others, and all belong to each: "Each person will inherit the entire earth" (159). "When presenting himself [to God], each person will implicitly carry within himself, as the seashell carries in itself the echo of the waves, the echo of all history, his relationship with the entire human life that unfolded in the world" (123).

Viewing this sixth volume of *The Experience of God* along with its five predecessors, how should we assess Fr. Dumitru's achievement? Among the various Orthodox "dogmatic theologies" that have appeared in the twentieth century, there are three of outstanding importance, written respectively in Greek, Russian, and Romanian. The three do not duplicate one another, for each has its distinctive approach. There is first the *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church* by Panagiotis Trembelas, published in Greek in three volumes (1959–61), and issued in French translation by the Monastery of Chevetogne, again in three volumes (1966–68). Secondly there is the major trilogy of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov, *On Divine Humanity*, once more published in three volumes: *The Lamb of God*, *The Comforter*, and *The Bride of the Lamb*. This appeared in Russian from 1933 to 1945, and in English translation from 2002 to 2008, published by Eerdmans. Although not entitled "Dogmatics," that is in fact what the work constitutes. Alongside these two, and fully deserving to be ranked with them, there is in the third place the *Orthodox Dogmatic*

Theology of Staniloae, published in Romanian in 1978 and in English translation from 1994 onward.

How should each of these three works be characterized? The *Dogmatics* of Trembelas is the most conventional of the three. In its structure it follows the normal sequence of topics adopted in standard Roman Catholic and Protestant manuals, starting with the sources of revelation and the existence of God, and concluding with the last things. This is also the sequence adopted by Staniloae. The *Dogmatics* of Trembelas is in many respects a conservative and even old-fashioned treatise, not reflecting the creative developments either in Orthodox or in Western theology since the First World War. What distinguishes the work of Trembelas, rendering it an invaluable tool of reference, are the extensive patristic citations. But, although he draws on key authors of the fourth and fifth centuries, especially the Cappadocians and Cyril of Alexandria, he almost entirely ignores the mystical theologians of a later period, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, and Gregory Palamas. He posits a sharp distinction between dogmatics and mysticism, between theology and spirituality, such that neither Bulgakov nor Staniloae would have accepted.

Bulgakov's trilogy is the most speculative and original of the three. It is more philosophical and less didactic than the work of Trembelas. Instead of beginning, as Trembelas does—and as is done also by Staniloae—with a general discussion of the concept of revelation and the existence of God, in his opening volume *The Lamb of God* he starts with the Person of Christ. His patristic citations are much less numerous than those of Trembelas, but he draws upon a broader range of writers, assigning in particular an important place to Palamas. Whereas Trembelas and Staniloae limit their exposition to doctrines generally accepted by all Orthodox theologians, Bulgakov includes a lengthy discussion of the figure of Sophia, or Holy Wisdom. Here his ideas have proved highly controversial, both in the past and equally today.

The *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* of Staniloae stands midway between the treatises of Trembelas and Bulgakov. He is more creative and exploratory than Trembelas, but less adventurous than Bulgakov. He does not, for example, embark on a discussion of sophiology. Unlike Trembelas, he takes full account of the mystical theology of the Fathers. Maximus is clearly his favourite patristic writer, but he appeals also to Symeon and Palamas. At the same time he engages in dialogue with Western thinkers such as Barth and Rahner. He writes in a style that is sometimes complex but often poetic. His approach is by no means "dogmatic" in an authoritarian sense. He is never content simply to state propositional truths in a doctrinaire fashion, but he seeks to expound the reasons that underlie the Church's teaching, indicating the inner logic of the Orthodox faith, its unity and coherence, and likewise its personal relevance to daily Christian living. Above all he evokes the *attractiveness* of the Church's tradition, its beauty and its liberating power.

The successful completion of the English translation of the *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* is a notable achievement. For many years to come it will form an invaluable resource for all who seek to enter more deeply into the inner meaning of Orthodoxy.

Metropolitan KALLISTOS of Diokleia

CHAPTER 1

DEATH AS PASSAGE TO LIFE ETERNAL

Eschatology is the final part (τα έσχατα, "the last things") of the existence of creation. It is the final part not in the sense that after it there follows the total end of existence but in the sense that this final phase lasts eternally without being followed by any other phase. According to the Christian faith, created existence has three phases: the first from creation until the coming of Christ, the second in Christ (or determined by Christ until the current form of the world comes to an end), and the third that which follows this end. In the opinion of those who have not come to know Christ, it has only two phases: the one from the beginning of their existence until death, and the one after death (for those who have a different faith). For others it has three phases, because even if they received Christ through baptism soon after their physical birth, the phase before baptism is distinct from the one in Christ.

This last (and eternal) phase of existence will be a happy one for those who received Christ and have developed their communion with Him; its happiness will consist in the perfection of communion with Him. But for others it will be unhappy, because even though they received communion with the risen Christ through baptism, they did not develop this communion during their earthly life; for this reason neither will they partake of it in the life to come.

It is this final and eternal phase that the entire earthly life in Christ aims toward. It was in view of this phase that Christ became incarnate, died on the cross, and rose again; it is why He calls us and remains (with our cooperation) in communion with us. It was in view of this phase that the entire divine *oikonomia* was thought of before all ages. And it is toward this final perfection in God that the world would have advanced if the Fall of our forefathers had not occurred. Thus God created the world with a view toward this end.

If this final phase did not exist, our entire earthly life with Christ would be in vain. Christians believe that the very meaning of life was fulfilled in Christ, as He granted the possibility for attaining the final perfection and eternal life.

Certainly, other religions believe in eschatology, and thus they attach a meaning to earthly life. But we can affirm that only the risen Christ offers us an objective certainty about the life to come. Communion with Him, incarnate and risen as man—communion with the eternal divine Person, incarnate for perpetuity as man and as such having entered into an intimate, eternal relationship with us—is the only communion that guarantees us true, eternal, conscious, and complete happiness.

For the Christian faith, as well as for objective judgment, the life to come (in which we remain eternally as persons) is decisive for the meaning of earthly life. Not only does it have the form of an eternally happy life for those who have accepted in Christ a full meaning of the earthly life but also the form of an eternally unhappy life for those who did not accept this meaning.

For Christians the eschatological plan, or eternal life after death, is not only a future event; it has begun through and in Christ, who as man rose from the dead. Because Christ remains with believers in an intimate relationship, or even within them, the eternal life has also begun for them as a promise. That is why the New Testament says that in Christ we are at "the end of the ages" (1 Cor 10:11; Heb 9:26). With Christ the "end of the ages" has begun, because these ages were fulfilled through Christ, who is present in them with the pledge of eternal life. Those who believe in Him are sustained through the life of His Resurrection; to a certain extent they are dead to the life of sin and to previous ages, the aeons of this world. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

If eschatology alone gives meaning to earthly life, then death is viewed as a necessary and reasonable moment in the trajectory of life that began at birth; it makes our earthly life pass into the eschatological phase, where the full meaning of existence on earth is revealed. Athenagoras, the former patriarch of Constantinople, said, "Death is a passage. The Resurrected One causes us to pass from death to life. We have been baptized in his death in order to participate in his resurrection. Little by little, our life winds down, and our baptism and our death coincide. By the life-giving cross, life finds its fulfillment through death. Without death, life would not have any reality. It would be an illusion, an unending dream."[1]

In fact, even if we as persons were to live forever on earth, our life would remain outside meaning. Death is the mystery through which we must pass in order to enter into the full meaning of existence, or the plenitude of existence. Even hell implies, from one point of view, a meaning because it takes us out of the ambiguous fog of life on earth. In hell one knows for certain that there is a paradise.

Earthly life calls for death as a passage toward the full meaning, because the fragmentary meaning of this life calls for the full meaning given by the plenitude of life in God. Without death, understood as the gate through which we pass toward full meaning, the fragmented rationality of earthly life appears nonsensical and inexplicable. If the world were to remain forever in this fragmentary meaning, it would be nonsensical, for if there were nothing beyond it, it would lead all human beings to ultimate death.

From this point of view, Christianity also considers death as a necessary and universal event. But Christianity explains death's necessity and universality through human existence's need to be fulfilled in the transcendent God. In this explanation death has meaning—indeed, it is an event through which life finds its meaning.

Death is the chasm or universal bridge over which we pass toward another existence, toward eternal existence. From this objective meaning of death, there springs forth a subjective one as well. Generally, death gives meaning and depth to our life on earth; thus it even aids our spiritual development and our salvation.

It is through death that the mystery of our existence as persons is revealed, as well as the depth and importance of our personal existence. The mystery of death and the mystery of personhood are tied together: when death is no longer experienced as a mystery, one's entire life becomes trite. And vice versa, when personhood is no longer experienced as a mystery, death also ceases to be perceived as mystery.

Death understood as a simple obliteration is not the most terrible enemy of the species, nor of nature (in which the person is lost), but of the person. But the person—as the greatest mystery of reality, as the only way in which man consciously experiences reality, and as the single reality that is not understood but understands everything, or is inclined to understand everything—does not allow himself to be shamefully disregarded by the supremely obtuse understanding of this strange phenomenon of existence. Death must represent a mystery that is equal to the mystery of the human person.

If man were constituted only of physical-chemical elements, death would not fill him with such an unabated anxiety and at the same time with a longing for a full life, which he feels exists beyond death. "Not base fear but horror and anguish which death inspires in us prove that we belong not only to the surface but to the depths as well, not only to temporal life but also to eternity."[2]

Death frightens us, but it also attracts us. "Horror and anguish at having to cross the abyss contain at the same time a hope that the final meaning shall be revealed and realized."[3] Without death, human existence becomes monotonous; it does not reach the absolute newness that it seeks by continually propelling itself toward something new. "When this world is apprehended as self-sufficient, completed and closed in, everything in it appears meaningless because everything is transitory and corruptible—i.e. death and mortality in this world is just what makes it meaningless."[4] "Death is the most profound and significant fact of life, raising the least of mortals above the mean commonplaces of life. The fact of death alone gives true depth to the question as to the meaning of life. Life in this world has meaning just because there is death . . . The meaning is bound up with the end. If there were no end, i.e. if life in our world continued forever, there would be no meaning in it."[5]

But death gives meaning to creation only because it is a bridge to an existence totally different from this one, to an endless existence whose meaning is its plenitude in God. That is, death only gives meaning because it categorically marks the vast difference between the two modes of existence and thus only because it is a chasm, an event through which the mode of this existence is totally changed. Death as an end of one incarnation, for the sake of another incarnation in a plane of this same passing essence, gives no meaning to a world without meaning.

In theological terms, death, as the single passage from here to God, shows the transcendence of God and of our full life in Him as its fulfillment. We have something from God even in this life, a *pledge*, as the Church Fathers put it. Nevertheless, the life of God and our full life in Him are separated from the present life by death. There is no continuity between our life here on earth and the life of God or our full life in Him:

> The fact that we must die shows the distinction, the strict border between God and our life. Surely, God is present in our life with His power of life. Nevertheless, God's life always remains beyond death. Between God's life and our life there is death . . . One cannot go to God without going through death . . . Death gives transcendence to the idea of God. Death totally abolishes our monist presumption, which dreams of an uninterrupted continuity of existence, and of a transition between God and our life. Death is the border at which the Lord of life and Creator appears, the One who alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16) and who has placed His creatures under the law of becoming and of death.[6]

There are other explanations for the necessity and universality of death, explanations in which death is considered as a moment that uncovers a meaning for life. Two of these explain death without God and suppose that precisely for this reason they give meaning to death.

One of these explanations considers death as a purely biological phenomenon through which the vital forces concentrated in one organism reenter the current of nature in order to be concentrated in other organisms. The other explanation considers death as a separation of the spirit from the body, because the spirit by itself, and not through some divine causality, calls for a life not limited by the body. The latter explanation has two ramifications: One considers that the spirit, after its separation from the body, is poured into a spiritual, pantheist essence. The other one, which is proper to certain non-Christian religions (or to spiritualism, whose ties to religion are very unclear), considers that the spirits lead a personal existence around God. Thus, without playing a role in introducing death into the world, God plays a role as the target toward which death leads.

The explanations that do not recognize a personal existence after death do not see death as an event that could give meaning to existence. If an impersonal nature or spiritual essence (that is, one that is unconscious of any meaning) existed eternally, what interest could this impersonal nature hold for the human person, the only one who reveals the meaning of existence or for whom there exists any meaning?

The explanation that affirms the existence of spirits around God after death, in addition to the fact that it does not explain the origin of death, cannot give sufficient proofs for a happy existence after death. This is so because God—according to this explanation—is not the God of communion who manifests Himself as such in His Triune existence or in the Incarnation of one of the Triune Persons as man, unto the ages of ages, an Incarnation that also ensures the identity of the human person who subsists. However, in this explanation death is not totally devoid of meaning. That is why the adherents of various religions can count, to a certain extent, on death as a positive event.

Some persons, especially in the West, who are influenced by the first two "explanations" of death but who are aware of the nonsense they load death with, seek to liberate themselves from the thought of death and to cover up its reality. Although they affirm that death is a natural phenomenon, they dread death, implicitly acknowledging that it is not natural at all for the human being.[7] That is why these persons do everything they can to cover up the dead, so that they might not be troubled in their own lives by the thought of death. A house in which a death occurs does not display any sign of mourning, and the dead person is taken surreptitiously to the cemetery or to the crematory and thus disappears unobserved.[8]

Death acquires its full meaning in the Christian explanation, which sees death as a moment in the human person's eternal dialogue with the personal God. For Christianity, death, even though it is the consequence of sin, has also preserved a positive sense because through it Christ brings us into full communion with God, that is, to a higher level of communion with Him and thereby to the level of the plenitude of life.

In Christianity, death is taken seriously (but without desperation) before it occurs, so that we may prepare ourselves to pass through it into the plenitude of communion with God. When death does occur, prayers are offered so that the deceased may be assured all the more of this plenitude. Death is neither trivialized before it occurs nor a reason for desperation when it does occur, and those who die are not quickly forgotten afterward. The dead are not mourned out of the despair that their unique mode of existence has disappeared into the void forever; rather, they are mourned in view of the loss of their personal help and at the thought that they died unprepared. Thus prayers for the dead have primary importance, on the occasion of their death and afterward, out of regret for losing a temporary help. From this also comes the obligation to remember them.

In fact, only through the Christian faith does death have meaning, both in regard to its origin and to the purpose it has acquired in Christ. The Christian faith gives a satisfactory explanation for death's origin: death results from the rupture of communion between the human person and God. However, death acquires a positive meaning in Christ, in that it can be overcome when communion with God is restored through faith in Christ.

The dread of death shows that death is not an entirely natural phenomenon but that it has been produced as a phenomenon contrary to nature, as a weakening of communion with God, the source of life. Christianity explains this dread of death by the fact that death appeared as a punishment for and consequence of the first humans' sin, through their departure from communion with God. That is why the Christian openly manifests a fear of the pains of death as the soul's separation from the body, just as Christ did, thus acknowledging this unnatural character of death. In this way the Christian differs on one hand from those who declare death a natural phenomenon, and on the other hand from those who have a desperate dread of death, much greater than that of the Christians.

Yet Christianity offers a remedy for the dread of death. Death in Christ is a means for our elevation from this incomplete and fleeting life (into which we have descended) to the life without death, to the plenitude of life through the encounter with Christ beyond death, after we have lived in part with Him here. And we have the certainty of our encounter with Him, of surpassing our death, in His victory over death through the Resurrection.

In the present state we are not at all content to live without dying, because we do not have the plenitude of communion with the Person of Christ. But as long as we are in sin, we are afraid of dying; we are afraid that due to our lack of preparation we might remain definitively outside of communion with Him. On his deathbed St. Anthony asked God to grant him a little more time for repentance. As they advance in a pure life, in the communion with Christ through faith, Christians overcome, however, not only the fear of the soul being separated from the body but also the fear of what will follow after that.

Thus *death appeared as an unnatural separation of the soul from the body, as a consequence of the weakening of man's communion with God*, the source of power and life, and therefore as a consequence of sin; the separation of the soul from the body, being the consequence of the weakening of communion with God, leads to the annihilation of this relationship after death. In Christ, because communion with God has been reestablished, death remains as the separation of the soul from the body, and thus the Christian experiences, along with other human beings, the fear of death's pains, but in more attenuated way. For those who are strong in the faith (as, for example, the martyrs), that fear is completely overcome.

In this fear the Christian has a living sign that death originated in our forefathers' sin, the consequences of which are preserved until the end of the world. But this fear has emboldened us to fight against the temptations of sin. In the body all remain subjected to death because of the necessity to fight against sin. Life on earth is the arena of this fight until the end of the world, so that death, in which the earthly body will end, might not be a transition to the definitive state of noncommunion with God.

Although death remains as a separation of the soul from the body, in those who are united with Christ it has become—instead of a passage to the definitive state of noncommunion with God—a passage to the plenitude of communion with Him and thus to the plenitude of life. This is because the believer, who bears Christ in himself, is strengthened in his soul from His power so that he may pass through death to life; it is so that the believer may rise at the end of the world, in the body that he had purified by his pure deeds, into a transfigured and radiant life, into resurrection.

Having been given this meaning, death acquires a positive sense and gives such a sense to one's entire life. The human person prepares himself throughout his entire life on earth by strengthening his communion with Christ, so that death may be his transition to the plenitude of communion with God and with his neighbors.

The spiritual writings speak of keeping in mind the death that awaits us, so that from this we may take incentive to not attach ourselves too much to the passing pleasures of the world. St. Anthony the Great says, "Death, when understood by men, is deathlessness; but, when not understood by the foolish, it is death. It is not this death that must be feared but the loss of the soul, which is ignorance of God."[9] Theodore of Edessa declares that life on earth acquires a meaning and is filled with a pure content when the human person transforms it into a conscious journey toward death and toward what comes after it, as the goal of life:

> "To journey without direction," it is said, "is wasted effort."[10] Instead, work purposefully, concentrate your intellect and always keep before your eyes the last hour before death. Recall the vanity of the world, how deceptive it is, how sickly and worthless; reflect on the dreadful reckoning that is to come, how the harsh keepers of the toll houses will bring before us one by one the actions, words and thoughts which they suggested but which we accepted and made our own. Recall the chastisements in hell, and the state of the souls imprisoned there. Recall, too, that great and fearful day, the day of the general resurrection, when we are brought before God, and the final sentence of the infallible Judge. Bring to mind the punishment that befalls sinners, the reproach, the reprobation of the conscience, how they will be rejected by God and cast into the age-long fire, to the worm that does not die, to the impenetrable darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (cf. Mark 9:44; Matt. 8:12).[11]

Evagrius the Solitary has a similar text, but he says this about hell: "Call to mind, also, what is even now going on in hell. Think of the suffering, the bitter silence."[12]

Therefore death is not only a destructive end that is "passively suffered" and "coming from without,"[13] but also a reason for man to prepare himself for it through his inner activity. "Clearly [death] cannot be an act of man, if it is conceived as an isolated point at the end of life, but only if it is understood as an act of fulfilment . . . achieved through the act of the whole of life in such a manner that death is axiologically present all through human life. Man is enacting his death, as his own consummation, through the deed of his life, and in this way death is present in his actions, that is, in each of his free acts, in which he freely disposes of his whole person."[14]

The more the human person makes death a helpful presence in his entire life, the more he transforms it into a passage toward the plenitude of life, and the more he fills his life on earth with value.[15] However, death remains a force that works in the human person toward the destruction of the earthly form of his existence. St. Paul says, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" (Rom 8:13).

In fact, on one hand our being increases in spiritual content (and therefore in spiritual fortitude and, for a while, even in biological force), and on the other hand it chronologically and interiorly moves toward death, or death increases within it. Karl Rahner considers that our being is in a voluntary movement of rounding off, of fulfillment, and that death represents the final point of realization; this realization means taking hold of myself as a person, liberating myself from the domination of the involuntary tendencies connected to the body and the world.[16] On the other hand, he says, the weakened body escapes my power more and more, so as to escape completely at the moment of death. Thus at the moment of death I as a person reach the apex of power that I can attain during earthly life, while I as a biological being arrive at a total powerlessness.[17] The powerlessness of the body as it approaches death puts a "veil" over the apex of the power attained by the person, and this "veil" that death puts over my strength as a person does not allow me the power to clearly see where I will pass through it: to the eternal life of happiness or to the eternal life of unhappiness.[18]

What is worth keeping from Rahner is the discovery of one positive sense that death might give to human nature itself. This was previously lacking in Catholic and Protestant theology, in which death was understood as a simple payment or juridical expiation accorded to God. In connection with this understanding of death in Catholicism, the Anglican theologian E. L. Mascall says, "What has often been lacking is the recognition that dying is an act which the dying person *performs*, an all-inclusive and self-committing act."[19] And he cites[20] the Catholic theologian Ladislaus Boros, who affirms, "In death the soul is confronted with the totality of its subjective dynamism of being (death as total self-encounter), by entering completely into the pancosmic world-relationship, into the basis of the world (death as total presence to the world)."[21] Boros continues, "Now if . . . the being that is man reaches the climax of his adulthood only in death, we can understand why it is in death that Christ's humanity became the perfect instrumental cause of our redemption, and why it is in death that is effected that full self-surrender to the Father, that reconciled us with God."[22] And: "When . . . Christ's human reality was planted, in death, right at the heart of the world, within the deepest stratum of the universe . . . at that moment in his bodily humanity he became the real ontological ground of a new universal scheme of salvation embracing the whole human race . . . We see that at Christ's death the whole world entered upon a cosmic spring ["sweet spring," as the Orthodox Lamentations service says] the harvest of which will be the remaking of our universe in newness and splendour at the end of time."[23] Thus, for every one of us, death is "an encounter with Christ realized in the essential sign of the basis of the world and of the spiritual dynamism of man"[24]; it is "man's first completely personal act, and is, therefore, by reason of its very being, the centre above all others for the awakening of consciousness, for freedom, for the encounter with God, for the final decision about one's eternal destiny."[25]

This makes understanding the general resurrection possible. It must be observed that this power to restore the entire material cosmos through death is due to the fact that through death one reaches beyond the material foundation of the cosmos by means of one's spiritual reality, which was instilled by God; God, however, remains in relation with this material foundation of the cosmos. Nevertheless, Rahner's understanding of death, and especially that of Boros, does not seem to correspond entirely to the Christian (or, more precisely, to the Orthodox) understanding of death, even though it comprises some elements worth mentioning.

From the Orthodox point of view, a few objections can be made in regard to this understanding. First, the idea of death as the fulfillment of life on earth needs a few final additions and shades of nuance, considering that the trajectory of earthly life (and this life's end) presents a great variety. Not all can actually have mastery over themselves as persons. Many human persons do not have the ability to do this, not even in a sudden flash of ultimate consciousness before death: perhaps they are surprised by death out of the blue or after their consciousness became incapable of thinking clearly about what was happening to them; or perhaps, further yet, they have reached a total carelessness toward death through unbelief. That is why the spiritual writings recommend that we should always be prepared—that is, realized as persons, masters over ourselves in any moment of our life on earth—even if we can increasingly deepen this state. But not all do this.

Nevertheless, many Christians struggle as much as possible to not let themselves come under the dominion of the passions of pleasure or pride (that is, self-abandon). They struggle to advance to a certain extent toward mastery over themselves as persons.

But at the same time, this includes a certain effort on their part to surrender to God, an effort that is equivalent to advancing toward death to sin, death to the enslaving passions. For only by surrendering to Him, in order to attain a full communion with Him in freedom, do they truly achieve mastery over themselves. What we say moreover toward Rahner is that the human person's self-mastery is on one hand accompanied by his surrender to God, and on the other hand by the refusal to give in to sinful tendencies. These two are aspects of a death in the positive sense. The human being dies by the fact that he both surrenders to God and becomes unaffected by the temptations of sin. And he does this during the entire course of his life but without ever reaching full surrender or the end of this effort. Once those who live their lives in this way are confronted with death (inasmuch as they are conscious), they crown their self-mastery—their self-denial and their total surrender to God—through an act of ultimate decision.

If this is so, the weakening of the body toward the end of life, along with the total powerlessness of the body that such persons feel approaching, is not experienced as a state opposed to this disposition of total surrender to God. Rather, it is experienced as a state that accentuates their disposition to surrender to God, and this disposition of theirs is equal to the total mastery of themselves, as persons. That is, they appropriate the body's state of weakness and total powerlessness as the completion of their disposition to surrender to God, to obey His will, and to be united with Him. For them, this state of weakness is their liberation from the enslaving passions and above all from pride—both of which place a distance between them and God. They appropriate this state willingly, as the renunciation of an existence separated from God, and as a helper toward their full experience of union with God.

In this way, death—as separation of the body from the soul and as decomposition of this thickened body—is no longer experienced as punishment but as surrender to God, as a means for union with Him; it is a means for the human being's fuller entrance into his mastery over himself as a person, even though death has its origin in the beginning punishment. Death remains also as a remembrance of the punished sin, and so that death may be overcome as a punishment.

Understood as surrender to God (surrender achieved more or less completely in the final moment but always present as intention and as movement in life), death could be considered as the human person's total surrender to God at the moment of death. This is even the case for the Christian taken unexpectedly by death, for his entire life, lived as an ever-fuller surrender to God, includes in itself the intention of total surrender.

Christians receive the power to live life as a progressive surrender to God from and in Christ, who lived and died in an exemplary surrender to His Father, in view of His complete union as man with Him. We have an example of how to imitate Christ, through His power, in the thief on the right hand of the Crucified One. Through death the thief entered into paradise with Christ, namely through union with Christ as He surrendered to the Father. Christ died crying, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," after which "He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46). It is said of the death of Christians that they "commit their souls" into the hands of the Lord. The falling asleep of the Lord's Mother is depicted in the Church's iconography as the taking up of her soul into the arms of Christ, certainly not without an act of surrender on her part. Most Christians die in Christ, during the course of a life of surrender to God (that is, a life of dying so that God may increase), so that they may achieve a complete surrender, or a complete entrance into life through their death at the end.

This power of Christ is received in the sacraments of the Church. Through the sacraments He dwells in us as the one who gives us power to live out (alongside Him) death to sin, or death as surrender to God;

and to continuously develop this death until the full acceptance of death as separation of the soul from the body. Because our death that we develop alongside Christ is our surrender to God, it is at the same time our increasingly spiritualized life; in this way the ultimate moment of death, as separation of the soul from the body, coincides with the ultimate entrance into the plenitude of life. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11). "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor 4:10). "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day" (2 Cor 4:16).

If through baptism we receive power from Christ for this death with Him so that we may always be alive in Him, and if this death-life is developed through our cooperation, then the words of Patriarch Athenagoras—that in death we actualize our baptism—acquire a deep significance. The death in which and toward which Christians who live in Christ advance is a death with Christ. It is at the same time, therefore, an advancement into life, because the Christ in whom they advance is the Christ who, through our dying in Him, brings us to resurrection with Him. "Existence toward death" (*Sein zum Tode*), which, according to Heidegger, characterizes human existence, is in Christ the existence toward the plenitude of life (*Sein zum Leben*). In Christ we have the full life of the age to come; that is why in Him we also have the death to the fragmented and corruptible life of this age.

Advancement in and toward that life is the same as the advancement in and toward death. That is, that life is combined with death, not so that death may diminish it but so that death may clear the path toward it.

The sacrament of chrismation gives us the power to work together for advancement in this death with Christ, which is advancement in the life with Him; confession reestablishes us in that life. The sacrament of the Eucharist offers us Christ, who, as a subject who dwelled in our subject, accepts our death, by means of which He carries us to resurrection. The sacrament of marriage also gives us the power to renounce the external life of egoism and to live a life of love, by which the spouses surrender themselves to God; this surrender is an act of love for Him. In order for us to patiently endure afflictions with a disposition of surrendering ourselves to God, so that we may also receive from Him the full spiritual life, we are given the grace of holy unction.

But if the weakening of the body, through which we advance toward death, is no longer something contrary to our strengthening in the Spirit and to our disposition to surrender ourselves to God, then when death approaches it no longer appears as a veil over the entrance into God's presence for those who have made much progress in the life of faith and works according to His will. The body weakened to the maximum degree becomes transparent to the full life in Christ that awaits believers.

Thus the saints and certain spiritually advanced Christians receive from God the announcement of the exact date of their death a few days before the end of their life, and before this end they see angels around their bed. The expression "Blessed is the death of the pious" refers to a state that occurs at the exact moment of the departure of their soul.

Certainly, before the departure of the soul, the knowledge of life after death is not complete; it is knowledge under a veil. If death is a bridge between the shores of this life and those of the life to come, it remains a mystery at the end. We know formally that we will arrive there, but what that "there" is like we do not know, aside from a certain flickering of it through the veil of our life in the body; and this body begins to disintegrate, or becomes gradually more diaphanous, for the saints and for spiritually advanced Christians.

In Christ, death has not only changed its own meaning but also the meaning experienced by those who live it out; it has revealed itself as a passage toward life. It has become not only the necessary passage toward full life but also a power for those who are in Christ during the course of their entire earthly life, a power through which they acquire full life in Christ:

> Man must give thought to death, not only because his is a life moving towards death [*Sein zum Tode*], but even more because death is a mystery of Christ the Lord. Since Christ died for the salvation of the world, and the life and glory of God, through the death of the Crucified, has been brought definitely into this world, there is nothing in all the world more important than this death. Compared with it, all other events are incidental and unimportant. Since we have received the vocation and the grace to die with him, the commonplace daily event called human

> death, towards which we all so reluctantly move, is raised into God's mysteries.[26]

But death does not have this positive sense for all human persons. For some it remains a dreadful event from which they try to escape, either through forgetfulness or through the effort of creating a state of indifference within themselves. It remains, however, what it has been from the beginning: a punishment for sin.

A great number of people oscillate between expecting death with hope and expecting it with fear. This is because they are not firmly decided upon a life according to God's will, devoid of the ambiguities that weaken the spirit or their character as a person in Christ; they have not set their minds upon a life that would allow them to gain a firmer hope that through death they will pass into the full life with Him, a hope that the Holy Apostle Paul had (Phil 1:21). For them death has not yet totally changed its sense of punishment for sin into the sense of passing into the full life in God, a sense acquired by those who live in Christ.

To the question of why some persons end up indifferent although they are given more time to leave this state of indifference, and again why the lives of others end before their still very oscillating mode of life is given a clear orientation, or why some die during childhood before deciding whether they will live for God or outside of Him—to all these questions, perhaps the response can be found in the fact that God sees in the deeper disposition of their souls that those in two former categories will not acquire any firmness, for which cause they will not ever be able to leave their former state. And in the case of children, God knows the direction toward which they would have gone once they attained the ability to decide on their own. Among others, some are left to actualize the good that they are capable of in this life, so that they may receive the most beautiful crown for their efforts and may also be an example for others; and still others, although on a good path, are taken before finishing this path because they are known up to where the path will (or will not) lead farther on.

Each person's end comes at the proper time for him. Each person (except for children) works during the given time to define in one way or another his mode of living: whether in a way that he may make much progress toward the good; or in a way in which not much progress can be made; or in a way in which he can only make progress toward evil, or in which he is left in a definitive state of indecisiveness. That is, the final death comes to some without their having the time to advance toward it through a gradual "death" because it was known that they would not make use of this gradual process, and to others death comes at the end of a long practice of it or of a long rejection of it. For all, the final death corresponds to their practice of or their refusal to practice a willing "death" during the course of their life. Those who refused it die unwillingly, toward their eternal death; the others die without dread, toward their eternal life.

Generally, it can be said that there are two kinds of death: death that comes as a supreme weakening of the spiritual essence and as a decomposition of the body, with both being experienced as a purely negative fact that follows from the inclinations toward evil and arrogance, inclinations that separate us from God; and death as a willing surrender to God, and thus as a union with Him, which comes as a result of practicing death to the inclinations toward evil and toward a life estranged from God.

Considering that union with God is experienced as the human person's willing surrender to God through death, we emphasize that this union does not nullify the human person, because the surrender is a voluntary personal act. The eternal union with God always has in itself the human person's act of surrender, or of mystical death with Christ, so that in his union with God he may be maintained eternally as a person and so that in total surrender full unity may also be maintained.

Karl Rahner comes somewhat close to this interpretation of death with Christ as the human person's perfecting force, a final death for which one prepares oneself by way of a death with Christ during the entire course of one's earthly life. Rahner does this by declaring insufficient the scholastic theory of Christ's sacrifice as a juridical satisfaction offered to God for the original sin. For in this case our salvation would not be understood as our fulfillment. But in understanding death, Rahner does not go as far as to interpret it as total surrender to God, a surrender prepared through a gradual death to sin during the course of the earthly life. He sees the value of death only in obedience. In this sense Christ dies during the entire course of His earthly life, or He prepares His final death through an evolving death. But in this way Rahner is in the middle of the road between the juridical theory of satisfaction and the theory that views death as a means of union with God and thus of entering into life—a means for those who die with Christ to be united with Him as a man. The understanding of death that Rahner proposes leaves unanswered the question that he also considers unanswered by satisfaction theory: Why was it necessary that Christ's obedience to the Father be specifically manifested in the acceptance of death?[27]

The fact of obedience evokes only a juridical, external relationship. It still does not imply union with God, which necessitates the total renunciation of created being to the autonomous existence. Only the human person's total surrender to God is both obedience and union; or it is obedience that, having surrender as its very content, achieves the union. It is this obedience that God asks of us, because He wants us to be united with Him. For only in union with Him does the salvation of created being lie. Union does not come as a reward for obedience; rather, union is implied precisely within the content of obedience, understood as surrender. And the union to which God consents is also His love for us; likewise, surrender on our part is also love, because obedience without surrender is not love, and it might have its driving force in fear. God does not take pleasure in our obedience out of fear but in obedience united with love, an obedience that manifests itself in surrender. And the salvation of which it makes us beneficiaries is not only our liberation from death as a result of the pleasure we give to Him through our obedience to Him as He stands before us, obedience through which we reestablish His offended honor; instead, it is the response to our will for union with Him, which in fact is His union with us, likewise carried out by love. Karl Rahner considers that death was necessary for salvation only because in death Christ's obedience reached its full measure, and we must do the same. He claims that this is how death is understood in Holy Scripture. But St. Paul views death as an occasion to be fully united with Christ (Phil 1:23), and the martyrs understood it the same way.

Thus, the last resort of the life with Christ (which is at the same time a death with Him), and therefore the last resort of the final death and its tendency toward eternal life, is love. Out of love for God, the human person accepts all his ascesis, which ends in death. Out of love for God the Father and also for the human person, the Son of God accepted death as a man so that we may be able to die with Him, also out of love for God.

For love, death is no longer an impenetrable veil placed over the life beyond it, for in love we have this life while still here on earth. Because of Christ's love for the Father, whose love surpasses that of any human person, in Christ's case death was not a veil that would cover His life after death, just as much as—according to Rahner—it covers it for us. The separation of the soul from the body was painful for Him too, and in this is it manifest that the divine power abstained from overcoming this pain. Still, the veil did not cover the life after the Resurrection so much as to cause Jesus to doubt this life, as happens to those who do not believe firmly. For He said to the thief on His right hand, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Only in view of the Father's abstention from overcoming, through the divine power, the pains of the Son's death as man can we interpret Jesus' words "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). For Christ, the Father remains a reality that is not only certain but also felt, even in His abstention from overcoming death through His divine power. This cry also has its *oikonomia*. Through this cry Jesus shows us that He accepts death out of His desire to be united as a complete man with the Father, so that we may learn to accept these pains out of this desire, and thus out of love for Christ.

Many times the pains of this life are not weaker than the pains of death. But we must endure these pains in life too, out of love for God, and also as a form of our surrender to Him. As the Holy Apostle Paul says, "Neither death, nor life [in pleasures, or the life we cannot tolerate] . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38–39).

CHAPTER 2

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

In older theology the teaching on the immortality of the soul was based on the notion of its indestructible, spiritual, and simple substance.

But if this teaching is the teaching of faith and not of philosophy, the immortality of the soul must be based on the belief that God wants the soul to be immortal. Therefore it must not be based on an indestructibility that the soul would have in itself even without the will of God. If the soul has indestructibility, its cause is the creating and preserving will of God, who wants the human person to be, through the soul, continuously dependent on Him. God has endowed the soul with the memory of its deeds and with self-consciousness so that it may unceasingly regret the deeds contrary to God, unceasingly know of its dependence on God, and unceasingly praise and love God.

It is for these reasons that God from the beginning endowed the soul with His grace. After the Incarnation of the Son as man and after His Resurrection, Christ Himself dwelled in the human person, or clothed him with Himself through baptism. Thus an important foundation for the immortality of the soul of believers is the fact that Christ dwelled in them, or that the Son of God, who was made man unto eternity, became a house and a garment for them. How could such a dwelling of Christ be destroyed at death? How could it be possible that Christ, the soul's garment and dwelling, remain devoid of a dwelling or an inhabitant for Himself? "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked" (2 Cor 5:1–3).

Thus the soul was created for eternal life, so that it may dwell in the house of light that is Christ, or so that Christ may dwell in it. Even if it remains devoid of Christ, it still exists eternally so that it might know for what great dignity it was created and might eternally regret the loss of this dignity, and thus remain in an eternal suffering on account of its separation from God, in whom it was, or who was in it.

Some more recent Protestant theologians maintain that after death and before the general resurrection, the soul no longer has a life; that the soul is destroyed together with the body or is immersed in "nonbeing" out of which it will be recalled, together with the body, at the general resurrection if the soul believed in Christ. This is an opinion that abandons the teaching on the human person's dualistic composition.[1]

This theory is the ultimate conclusion of Luther's opinion about the sleep into which souls fall after death (with the exception of some), while awaiting the last judgment. It is from Luther that these sects and these theologians got the idea that from death forward the human person cannot live through a bodiless soul.[2]

In general, both Lutheranism and Calvinism have kept the general Christian conviction that death is only a separation of the soul from the body, and that the soul continues to exist after even death.

Holy Scripture, however, affirms categorically the existence and working of the soul after death. We mention 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord," as well as Philippians 1:22. We also mention Ecclesiastes 12:7, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." And in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we see that these two also live after death and before the general resurrection of their bodies; therefore their souls are alive (Luke 16:19–31). Finally, there are many places in Revelation (4:10–11; 5:8–14; etc.) that speak of the twenty-four elders who venerate the Lamb, or of the great multitude standing before the throne of the Lamb (7:9, 19:1–6), or of "those who dwell in heaven" (13:6; 14:3, 13; 15:2; etc.). And again, "I saw under the altar the souls of those who have been slain for the word of God" (6:9).

Although Althaus, one of the Protestant representatives of the theory that through death the human person will be entirely destroyed until the universal judgment, maintains that death should be understood in all of its three aspects—as linked with God by creation, anger, and grace[3]—this theory (as well as that of soul sleeping until the last judgment) retains only death's aspect of punishment, not its aspect of created beings' ontological passage to God or its aspect of grace, that is, of escaping the consequences of sin. This theory is an extension of the Protestant doctrine of the total depravity of man brought about by the Fall, and of the theory of justification or juridical salvation. If the whole human person remains morally depraved during his entire life on earth, not even a personal-spiritual kernel or core is left in him to be preserved; the entire human person must be destroyed, being equally infected by sin.

There is no such destruction in the Orthodox view, in which the mind and heart of the human person become, even during earthly life, the throne and dwelling of God, or they radiate the divine light like the peak of Mount Sinai. We do not see any reason why God would remain for so long without this throne of His, without a loving relationship with the believer; neither do we see why God would suffer the deified person to be destroyed or to be left in such a long sleep. Death, as spiritualized persons say, cannot reach the spirit that has been illumined by the rays of eternity here on earth. The Orthodox doctrine about the preservation of these rays follows from the value of love for God, a love whose subject is the believing person. Dostoyevsky says through his hero Stepan Trofimovitch, "My immortality is necessary if only because God will not be guilty of injustice and extinguish altogether the flame of love for Him once kindled in my heart. And what is more precious than love? Love is higher than existence, love is the crown of existence; and how is it possible that existence should not be under its dominance? If I have once loved Him and rejoiced in my love, is it possible that He should extinguish me and my joy and bring me to nothingness again? If there is a God, then I am immortal."[4]

Certain Protestant theologians' conclusion that the soul is destroyed through death follows from the Protestant doctrine that Christ does not dwell in believers during their earthly life. Althaus says that belief in the immortality of the soul eliminates the character of God's judgment from death.[5] But it does not completely eliminate it, because the spirit of a righteous person also passes through judgment; if God finds it radiant, then it goes on to happiness. And apart from this, the human person is punished on earth by death.

In supporting the theory that the human person is totally destroyed through death, Althaus employs a theory common today: that the human person does not have an indestructible soul, different from the body (that is, that he has a monist constitution). Althaus also supports his argument with the affirmation that the human person must realize that the life to come is due not to the soul's indestructible nature,[6] but to an act of omnipotence and divine mercy; thus the human person must be completely destroyed so that he may realize that only God gives him life again. Althaus also thinks that only this theory makes death a serious event, as in fact death presents itself before the human person's consciousness—an event whose importance is not decreased by the soul's continued life.

To the first argument we respond that we cannot construct a doctrine of faith based on a philosophical theory while Holy Scripture and the need of the religious person express the opposite.

To the other two we respond first that the human person remains conscious of his dependence on God and of the seriousness of death without admitting that he will be destroyed by death. He experiences death as an immersion in nothingness and thus sees the possibility that God will destroy him completely; if He does not do so, this is due to His mercy. Second, the human person feels that the kind of life he receives after death depends entirely on God. The righteous person feels that his eternal life comes from God, and the sinner realizes that the emptiness of life in him is due to his estrangement from God. If man does not continue to exist, where is the subject who would eternally live out his dependence on God? And third, the human person experiences this dependence on God because the life after death is completely different from the one here.

Surely, in a certain sense, the human person remains as a spiritual or personal basis that is indestructible even in sinners.[7] The only difference is that this spiritual factor in the believing person, after he has here strengthened and developed his functions in contact with the spiritual world, will receive an unimaginably rich fulfillment in the life to come. As for the sinner, however, he will carry with him an atrophied and perverse state that will not be devoid of a certain activity, experience, and variety. On one hand he will be powerless and emptied of all the pseudo-values in which he believed here. But in the torment caused by this loss, there will still be a human experience. He will remain in a certain relationship with God, be it only negative. Thus the righteous person will receive an overabundance of spiritual life as a more than just reward for the loss of his psychic-biological life. In contrast, the sinner, devoid of his psychic-biological life, will receive nothing in exchange but will retain a consciousness tormented by this emptiness, not entirely extinguished.[8]

For the righteous person the disappearance of the body and of the veil that the body imposed on the spiritual life will completely liberate the spirit's rich contents and deep functions, will bring into actuality all memories, will clear the spiritual vision, and will enrich the spirit with the knowledge of wider and deeper dimensions of reality, with its transcendental and fundamental dimensions.[9]

But if in his life on earth the human person did not exercise all the functions of the spirit, the loss of his empirical life will not be recompensed with a revelation of the spiritual life. His distorted spirit, stripped of the wrappings of the phenomenal life, will not be able to propel itself toward the spiritual life. He will be left with nothing of what he worked for here, except for the regret (which cannot fix anything) that he has not strengthened in himself the functions of the incorruptible spirit. Death burns everything in him, as in a fire, with nothing being left behind after the blaze (1 Cor 3:13–15). He will have an existence that is empty of any content worthy of attention and that is incapable of forming or receiving such content.

Therefore, for him who cultivated his communion with Christ here on earth, death is the passage to an abundance of life not so that his spirit may simply be liberated from the body but so that he may enter into a fuller communion with Christ. That is why, for him who did not cultivate this communion, death is a passage to a state in which it is impossible to still maintain through the body a certain relationship with the world, with others. But his conscious existence is still something positive. The unrest of the tormented person has a value: it indicates the fact that man is a person, or a conscious individual.

In any case, for both he who cultivated his communion with Christ and he who did not, the life to come will be so completely different that we can say that they will lose the form of life they had here, which suffered a catastrophe. But the catastrophe should neither last for millennia nor be extended to its ultimate personal basis, so that man might receive a new existence after death. That is why death remains, however, a fearful event.[10] The righteous person's strength is manifested precisely in the fact that he accepts that he must pass courageously through this fearful moment. On the other hand, from what has been said, we can see that what rises from death is the integral person of the human being: that of the righteous as now incomparably more lucid and richer, and that of the sinner as poor and empty.

In this sense we can say that immortality is not based on the indestructibility of the soul viewed as a substance but on the indestructibility of the person. Or rather, immortality is based on the indestructibility of the soul as the basis of the human person; it is based on the indestructible relationship between God and the human being as persons, given that the person is the agent in this relationship. For the relationship between God and the human being is shown to be much more important if the human being is not destroyed for a while but is maintained uninterruptedly, if he passes through judgment immediately after death and then is rewarded or punished with a new kind of life, according to how he lived while on earth. If God made the human being a person as a partner in a relationship, He made him for an eternal and uninterrupted relationship.

Only objects are dissolved into nothing. Persons remain indestructible as unique, original entities, but at the same time as sources of unceasing newness through their attitudes and the revelations of their will. We cannot forget a person, whether he has done us good or evil. In both cases we want him to last forever, either to repent for the evil done to us or to continually delight us with his love.

But what for us is only an unattainable wish, for God is a reality. For Him, in fact, any person with whom He has established a relationship will never cease to exist. When He created the human being as a person, God gave him significance as His partner forever; He has created him for an uninterrupted relationship with Him. This is also seen in the uniqueness of the person. No person can be replaced with another in what he can offer. It is not the person who suffers from his own disappearance but the others. Through a person's death the possibility of an irreplaceable relationship is taken away from others. It is the same with God; each person who is totally lost would mean the loss of an irreplaceable relationship. Is God content with the absence of irreplaceable relationships after He willed them? Does His love suffer the disappearance of persons toward whom it was directed? If it does, then why would He bring them back to life?

The theories about the destruction of the whole person through death hide Protestantism's known misconception regarding the value of the human person, its known affirmation of the exclusive reality of God before human nothingness. The human person's permanent and uninterrupted existence depends upon his unique value for God. If God's love is uninterrupted, the existence of the persons toward whom this love is shown must also be uninterrupted. And the continuity of God's love is linked to its perfection. We may forget, because we do not love in a perfect way. But God does not forget, because He loves perfectly.

If souls ceased to exist between death and the universal judgment, this would mean that the relationship between God and these persons was interrupted. But we cannot imagine that God would interrupt His relationship with a person once He had brought him into existence. For otherwise why did He bring him into existence? Likewise, the human being must always be conscious that God never has and never will interrupt the relationship with him, that he is not an accident for God but has a permanent value. The adherents of the theory of the soul's destruction try in vain to maintain that God keeps the dead in a relationship with Himself by remembering them and by the decision to bring them back to life.[11] To call to mind someone who was or who will be inevitably leads to the painful feeling that you miss him, and this feeling is borne out of necessity by the one who does not have the power to keep the loved one alive. But God does not lack this power. If God cannot forget the one with whom He was in a relationship, He can maintain him in existence, so that when remembering him He will not also feel that He misses him.

In this way God also wants to show that His love endures forever, even for those who will not respond eternally to His love. Otherwise the fact that they will also be resurrected would seem incomprehensible. Each person is a unique reality, a unique sign of the creative imagination of God, and each remains as a unique testimony to it, as a unique form of His revelation. God can never forget any person, and if He cannot forget him, He will also keep him in existence. But if He can forget him for a while, He can forget him for eternity. The thesis that certain persons are destroyed for a while leads to the possibility of their eternal destruction, and this renders creation, the Son of God's Incarnation as man, the Resurrection, and the entire plan of salvation devoid of any seriousness. In Christ as man, God entered into an intimate, potential relationship with all human beings, even if subjectively some of them have no knowledge of this relationship. God affirmed, through the human face He gave to His Son, the eternal value of all human faces. All of them remain in a varied relationship with Christ, and yet the freedom of human beings as persons is not annulled, for this would make them nonhuman. In Christ, God has tied His existence to humanity, or vice versa.

God's concern for the human person as such would not be complete, however, if He were to destroy the human persons who did not carry out His will. St. John of Damascus said that the existence of demons too, as an existence produced by God, is a good thing.[12] God wants to show that He can tolerate even the existence of persons who use their freedom in a way that is not pleasing to Him. The opposite would mean denying the importance of the freedom given by Him. But God does not deny this important gift that He gave to the human being. He does not set certain conditions upon this gift. In the end these beings too testify to their dependence on God; they too are in a dialogue with God, even if they respond negatively to His call. God does not feel threatened by the somewhat autonomous existence of certain beings alongside Him.

CHAPTER 3

THE INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ETERNAL HELL

All three major Christian confessions teach in general that each soul, surviving after death, goes immediately thereafter through a separate judgment, after which it is sent off to happiness or to torments, according to how it is found at that judgment. At the end of the world, there will be another judgment, the universal one.

Opposed to this teaching is the theory that souls evolve endlessly after death. It has two forms:

1. The first form consists in the affirmation that the human will and human fate are indefinitely variable. According to this theory, the human being can change direction during the course of the life to come. The will is never strengthened definitely in one direction or another, either in this life or the next, in order that it might pronounce judgment upon the human being immediately after death. Eternity will be an endless succession of happy or unhappy existences for human beings, who are eternally free to lead a good or an evil life. A concrete form of this doctrine is the theory of reincarnation or metempsychosis, maintained by anthroposophists and spiritists.

2. The second form, named universalism, maintains that in the end all souls will attain the same degree of happiness, for a free being can repent at any time, and in the end all will repent. Evil will end at some point, for every evil is medicinal, and therefore temporal.[1]

In general, this theory opposes in principle any judgment of God's, either individual or universal, that would eternally divide human persons based on their decision during their short life on earth. Among the supporters of this theory we mention Gotthold Lessing, who, in the name of idealist pantheist philosophy, replaced the double end of humanity with an endless evolution. In the theological realm Friedrich Schleiermacher, Otto Pfleiderer, Ernst Troeltsch, Reinhold Seeberg, Hermann Lüdemann, and Willy Hellpach supported this evolutionist theory.[2]

Three arguments are presented in support of these theories: (1) the indecisive character of the present life for determining the eternal fate of human beings, (2) the eternal freedom of the human person, and (3) the impossibility of reconciling divine judgment with divine goodness.

1. In support of the decisive character of present life, first we present the words of Holy Scripture, from which a series of conclusions can be drawn.

Holy Scripture shows that life on earth is the arena in which the human person decides his fate for eternity, for after death he cannot change his fate. This is mentioned first of all in a general way, considering life as "the time" we have. "While we have time, let us do good to all men" (Gal 6:10). "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work" (John 9:4).[3] But then the Scripture specifies that life on earth has this decisive character because it is life in the body: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). "For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8; see also Eph 6:8; Rom 2:5–6).

From these words and from the whole spirit of the Holy Scripture, one sees that, according to revelation, man is an active being and therefore complete only in the body. He works toward his perfection by spiritualizing the body, that is, by the fact that he makes the body a medium for the senses and for good works.[4]

God created this entire visible world so that, through man, He might become all in all. This is the human person's specific mission: to be the link between God and the world, a link between all things, by uniting his spirit with God.

God has a cosmic plan of salvation; He does not save singular spiritual monads. The human person cannot fulfill this unique mission except in a body intimately connected with this world. This is why the Son of God Himself became a man in soul and body, so that through His humanity He might gather the entire creation in Himself. How then could man become perfect as a spiritual being if he did not act upon the world, if he were not strengthened as a spirit—with God's help—in relation to the visible world? Moreover, only in this bodily life does man have needy fellow men whom he can help through his body. St. John of Damascus says, "When the market day is over, there is no more trading for goods. For then where are the poor? Where are the liturgists and the psalmody? Where are the good works? Before the hour of death, we can help each other, and we can offer manifestations of brotherly love to God, the lover of mankind."[5]

Only the theory of reincarnation would seem to take into consideration the necessity of the body for the perfection of man. But in reality it deprives of decisive character any life through which a soul would pass in its successive incarnations. For this theory sees the world as eternally ascending and descending up and down, without any final goal and thus without any sense. There is no absolute level of existence toward which the world would tend and in which the incarnations would totally come to an end. If such an absolute level existed, it should have been attained for eternity, because one eternally climbs up the steps toward it. But these incarnations do not maintain the same person in a real continuity as he moves from one incarnation to the next. In any particular reincarnation the same being does not recognize himself as identical with his previous selves. The present "I" is not identical with the "I"s of previous incarnations. The perfection of future "I"s does not concern me. Properly speaking, all persons are lost—if they can still be called persons. What joy do I have in my future superior incarnations if I do not consciously register my progress from this incarnation to the future ones?[6]

In fact, anthroposophy maintains that the series of reincarnations leads beings to their intermingling in a supreme spiritual essence, so that they then may be detached from this essence again to become individual material parts that are once more gradually spiritualized. This theory combines Origenism—which is linked to the theory of the formation of successive worlds that fall into and rise out of themselves—with successive incarnations within these same worlds. Thus the critique of Origenist relativism belongs alongside the critique of reincarnations, which make the human person even more ephemeral.

Regarding the Origenist form of the theory of successive descents and ascents, St. Maximus the Confessor wondered how spiritual beings could have moved away from the original unity, because in that unity they experienced the supreme good, and thus there was no longer room in them for any other desire.[7] And what is the guarantee that, once gathered in the original unity, they would not move again, repeating endlessly and senselessly the series of falls from and returns to plenitude? This would mean that created beings could not find complete happiness anywhere. St. Maximus sees the meaning of movement in the fact that we tend toward the final goal: that created beings rest eternally in the divine infinitude. Without the inner tension toward such a final goal—absolute perfection in the infinite divine plenitude—movement has no meaning.[8] It deceives us with immediate goals that in fact do not take us out of the plane of relativity, whether we advance further in this plane or we continuously rotate in a circle. In this case, time, in which this movement is produced, has no final goal within eternity, and therefore no meaning. Properly speaking, without such an eternal stability in the eternal God, there is no true eternity. The distinction between time and eternity disappears. Everything becomes an eternal time or a temporal eternity, with a movement that does not lead to any ultimate meaning, to any absolute plenitude. The absence of a distinction between relative and absolute implies the absence of a distinction between movement and stability in the infinite One; there is an eternal movement that leads nowhere. Movement loses its great value as advancement toward the absolute good.[9] The distinction between good and evil also becomes relative. For movement is both a product of the Fall and the means of rising again to a place from which one falls another time, for in it one does not find perfection, *pleroma*. This world has real value only if it is unique. It has real value only if it is God's positive creation in the sense of being a departure point for the created being, so that he may advance from his initial state to the state of being full of God (and to this advancement the creature must bring his own contribution). That is, God's creation has value because it is a departure point from the state of "being" (εἶναι) that the created being has as a gift from God, through the state of "well-being" (εὖ εἶναι) that he obtains through the movement implanted in him but positively actualized by his will, and to "eternal well-being" (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) as God's ultimate and eternal gift.

In this way our existence on earth has a unique, decisive importance. Time is its exclusive form, and this gives time a decisive value, a value that corresponds to that of eternity. Historical life on earth is raised above relativity if obtaining the absolute life in God depends solely on it. It becomes absolute through participation, to translate the patristic expression "deification through participation." Thus time is also a grace. Eternity cannot be transformed into gradual new decisions and acts; this would mean it was transformed into time.

On the contrary, if time is eternal, if it continues eternally like an infinite pool, it loses its decisive importance, and every historical act loses its unique importance. Anything can be done anytime; anything can be repaired anytime, in a relative sense. Nothing is bound to a certain historical moment, to a certain person. There is no real progress; everything becomes a tiring uniformity. There is no rush to respond to any appeal. One can postpone responding as long as one likes. With the knowledge that there is an endless time to decide, one can keep postponing the decision. Eternity is not a setting for new decisions, nor is endless time a setting that requires a pressing decision. This is why eternity is only the setting within which we reap the eternal benefit of decisions in time. Eternal time is no longer a setting for real perfection.

There is no longer anything wrong with postponing the fulfillment of a decision as much as possible; there is no longer anything wrong with not doing the requested good now. In this case the philosophy of torpor appears as the wisest one. In the eternal dominion of this sort of time, there is no decisive period of existence.

But if there is no longer a time for obligatory decisions, then there is no importance attached to any one human person or another, nor to the totality of persons who are being perfected. That is, there is no longer any person who has a unique character linked to his own time. If we can still speak of persons, they are uniform. Any person can be killed because any other one can replace him. Neither one person nor all together can move time from its relativity, and such persons do not move toward the absolute so that they might become suitable for it. If there is, however, an eternity parallel to eternal time, it is exclusively reserved for God's eternally perfect Person, who has no need of perfection. But what kind of eternity would it be if the divine Person could not oversee and arrange time, could not create it and act within it in order to make other persons eternal?

In fact, the only eternally perfect person is God, who invests each human person with a unique value. If time were eternal, imprisoned in platitude and relativity, there would be no place for the absoluteness of a divine Person who would maintain with every human person a relationship of absolute concern. This sort of time cannot have a relation to the real eternity, and it cannot be really filled with it.

An indefinite evolution with (or without) reincarnations within the same form of the world, an evolution manifested in the falls and rises of other worlds or within the same world, implies a world without eternal persons, a world in the pantheist sense. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that successive reincarnations or even endless evolution is not possible except in a way of thinking that confuses rational nature with irrational nature, animal nature with inanimate nature; in such a system all of reality is reduced to a single substance that manifests itself under many aspects, or rather under many appearances.[10]

St. Gregory indicates how good and evil are confused in such a conception in the following way: "How is it possible for the man who has come into being from evil [through the fall from plenitude] to escape from it?"[11] Those who hold to this idea "assign the beginnings of things which came into existence to some evil accident . . . So if the beginning of life is like this, obviously also that which follows will continue in accord with the beginning. For no one would say that good grows from evil, or evil from good."[12]

The idea of a new fall that leads to a new reparation, and thus to a new ascent, implies an irreducible ambiguity: the evil of the fall, and yet the good purpose of the fall. To whom is the reparation made if there is no personal God? And how can what is not done out of freedom but on the basis of a universal law be called a reparation? And can a reparation that is made for mistakes committed in a previous existence, mistakes for which someone does not feel responsible because he does not recognize them as his, be called a personal reparation?[13] We also mention that most of the time, although it is said that we must have passed through various reincarnations for eternity, we do not lead a good life, and thus we do not show that we learned something from the previous infinite lives.

Through a personal reparation I am not going to repair in this life mistakes from past lives about which I have no knowledge, because I cannot feel responsible for those lives.

All reincarnations appear useless for the person if they occur in order to fulfill a senseless law of the universal substance. Only a unique temporal existence meant to lead us to eternity gives full meaning to this life, during which we have enough time to decide. For in this life we learn not only from our own experience but also from the experience of all the history that preceded us, from the experience of all the previous generations and of so many people we meet. From these experiences we learn infinitely more than from previous lives that we do not remember, more than from this succession of lives that forcefully divide us from any solidarity with a unique and absolute importance. We learn from the irreproachably good teaching placed at our disposal by the revelation of God, who is the supreme, good Person. God concentrates all eternity around me so as to convince me to decide for the good in the present existence. We learn in the atmosphere that encircles us on all sides and makes demands of us through so many acts of love toward us. These acts of love belong to God and to others as well, and they make this life a life of unceasing and unique responsibility. He who for so many reasons does not allow himself be penetrated by responsibility in this life would do the same in any number of other lives, which would all lack the unique responsibility to obtain eternity. If the eternal existence of my fellow human beings depends exclusively on this life, how much does this increase my responsibility toward them?

We learn, ultimately and in the supreme degree, from the Son of God who became man, was crucified, and rose again for us; He dwells in us with His love, giving us the divine power to die to sin and to live in Him, in God Himself, and to follow Him in the good we do to others. Human life is open to the divine life in such a direct way that we can be raised into it without a ladder consisting of the endless steps of so many reincarnations, which still do not lead us to the absolute life of God. Thus no one can save himself—no matter how many lifetimes he lives and how many evolutions he goes through—if salvation is participation in the divine life, not an ascent on relative steps that never reach the absolute and that never give us everything. Salvation is not the result of fulfilling certain laws; no one can obtain salvation alone. Salvation is a gift that we have from God, who comes to us by becoming man, thus drawing near to us in the highest degree. Through this, life on earth becomes of decisive importance for direct communication with God, who through His incarnate and risen Son establishes Himself in this life, directly opening our temporality to the eternity in Christ.

When the Son of God became man and came into our plane, making it possible for us to be in communion with Him, He transformed our life on earth into a direct and open gateway toward the absolute. Life on earth is no longer one life out of many others, a life lost on some step of an evolution that never reaches perfection, but a life with a unique importance that is in the process of being filled with the personal God's eternal life.[14]

When we enter into communion with Christ, the God-Man, we are lifted up at once into a horizon of light and infinite life. We have the potential to fully enter into this horizon after death, and we can do so without having to search for it by endlessly ascending the ladder of a law within a system that in many regards is finite, or relative—a system from which one can never pass into the absolute.

We have suddenly entered into an intimate relationship with the divine Person, the infinite source of love, who is beyond any relative movement within a monist reality; we have entered into a relationship with the divine Person, who is above any relative infinity of levels taken in itself and who is the source of absolute infinity.

Loving communion with a human person introduces us to a plane of life that is totally different from the way in which we relate to objects, or from the way in which we, in our individual isolation, more and more scrupulously fulfill certain norms for our life. If this is true, so much more does the entrance into communion with Christ our God, the absolute Person—who Himself is in communion with two other absolute Persons—introduce us through grace into the plane of life that is infinitely deeper than that of the relationship with all objects and all human persons, infinitely deeper than that of all individual experiences. The law of compensation or of reparation, or of a self-caused evolution, can mean a process of gradual improvement (even though this is very problematic), extended in innumerable existences, as on an endless ladder. But in communion with a person who loves powerfully, the life that I do not have as a result of evolution or my own efforts is suddenly poured into me, in a thoroughly invigorating way, as a new beginning that has no continuity with the existence in these former things. I experience it as a sudden break from the powerless monotony of the old man, as a rebirth. But I experience, infinitely more and in an entirely perfect way, the event of entering into communion with the Person of God, who has infinite love and power and who in Christ came into the plane that is accessible to me.

2. The argument that the spirit is essentially free has been brought against the divine judgment but in favor of the ultimate universality of salvation, or of the indefinite variability of the state of souls. Even Origen sustained the latter theory with this argument.[15] But a freedom that leads all souls to salvation, or that makes it possible for all of them to pass eternally from good to evil and vice versa, is properly speaking no longer freedom. If all attain salvation either by the will of God or through a law of intrinsic evolution, where is the freedom? Likewise, if souls are led against their will to one incarnation after another, or to one fall after another, where is the freedom? Again, if no one ever reaches perfection in the infinity of divine life, and all continue moving within the plane of eternal relativity, what is freedom good for?

Christian freedom presupposes an absolute that the human person can fight for or can refuse. Without this absolute the human person lacks all support and any cause for affirmation. In a plane of eternal and universal relativity or of a strict natural process, the fight for freedom, which on one hand is presupposed by freedom and on the other hand promotes it, loses any incentive. That is why freedom has two forms: freedom obtained by fighting to achieve the absolute good, to impose its victory, and to unite with it; and freedom obtained by fighting to liberate the person from enslaving passions, so as to enter into loving communion with other persons, communion that is nourished by the communion with the supreme Person, with God. It is in this communion that the true and complete good is found. He who has attained this has the true freedom (identical with the true and infinite good) from which he no longer wants to depart and from which he can no longer depart, in the sense of an acquired powerlessness. In this communion the person has an unceasing and unending newness, through the good that shines forth from the supreme Person and is manifested in interpersonal communion.

There is also, however, a freedom that is opposed to uniting itself with the absolute good, or that refuses communion with the supreme

Person, the source of love who makes complete communion with other persons possible. This freedom has something equivocal in itself. On one hand it lets itself be carried away by the egoism of enslaving tendencies, and in this sense it is a false freedom. On the other hand, encouraged by these tendencies, it opposes the true freedom, which delights in communion with the supreme Person, because it has the impression that its opposition is the true freedom.

Both these forms of freedom become accustomed to affirming themselves in eternity, each one considering itself as the true freedom. In this way he who is not in communion with God can never be changed by God in his denial of Him, which he considers as the true freedom; likewise, he who is in communion with God will never leave it, feeling himself to be greatly more justified in the true freedom, in which he has the unending and eternally new plenitude of life. Thus God does not hinder anyone from remaining eternally in the narrowness of his egoism, a narrowness that he interprets as the true freedom.

In the preceding considerations we linked the reality of the freedom of created beings to the reality of interpersonal communion and, in the last analysis, to the reality of their communion with God. It is incomprehensible to conceive of a true freedom without any thought for the subject of communion. It is equally incomprehensible to imagine a perfect communion—therefore a freedom in the eternal happiness between human persons—that is not nourished by communion with the supreme Person become man, that is, with Christ.

3. By not taking into consideration man's openness to communion with God, those who adhere to the idea of a universal salvation (or at least to salvation's eternal variability) believe that an eternal hell established by God's judgment is incompatible with His goodness.

But really such persons do not take God's existence as a Person seriously, for this eternal evolution toward an ever-higher universal good (or this eternal variability) occurs on the basis of a universal law in which God cannot intervene. They do not take into consideration that without God even this salvation or universal eternal variability is not, properly speaking, salvation. Rather, it is a sort of hell, a sort of death in the boredom of eternal relativity, which becomes unbearably tormenting as it is extended and is proven to be an eternal state.

Paradoxically, those who think that God institutes hell through an act of external justice (Thomas Aquinas and Dante) and those who deny hell demonstrate the same misunderstanding of happiness as the communion of created being with God. Thus those who deny God's judgment affirm the same thing, the same universal inferno, as those who acknowledge it as an act of external justice. For a happiness that is given as an external state (the created supernatural) and not as communion is also a sort of hell of eternal relativity.

Thus those who deny the inferno based on the idea of divine justice fall into affirming a hell that is instituted because God's effective presence is entirely lacking. Berdyaev makes the same mistake by saying that both the affirmation and the negation of the eternity of hell represent a nonpermissible rationalization of the mystery.[16] But neither does he escape this rationalization when he denies hell. In this way he comes close to the position of those who affirm that those found in hell will surely escape; this affirmation is based on an inevitable logic of the movement of souls, which pass from suffering to regret.

St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John of Damascus offer us a totally different interpretation of hell. They do not regard hell as sustained by God's positive act of condemning those who refuse Him; rather, they see it precisely in those persons' refusal to love Him. St. Maximus affirms that God loves him who is in hell and he values God; his unhappiness consists specifically in the fact that he is separated from God and lives with those who hate God, those whom he himself hates. "A trial harder than any punishment is to be eternally together with those who hate us and those whom we hate, even without any other torment than that, and to be separated from those who love or are loved [valued]. For God, when He pronounces a just judgment, is not hated by those whom He judges, for by nature He is (and He is called) love; and neither does He hate those who are judged, [being by nature] free from that passion."[17]

And St. John of Damascus says, "God eternally offers the good things to the devil, but he refuses to receive them. And in the age to come, God offers the good things to all, for He is the source from which good things flow. But everyone participates in the good inasmuch as he has made himself capable."[18] Therefore it is not God who is the author of devil's eternal torments, but the devil "torments himself" and "he made himself the cause for punishment or, better said, he punishes himself by desiring things that do not exist."[19]

Christianity does not hold to either the impersonalist view of evolution in eternal relativity or the juridical view of a personalism weakened by the law of impersonal principles. This latter view interposes between persons an order of things, or works done in conformity with certain laws. Christianity, and especially Orthodox Christianity, explains both hell and paradise—that is, both eternal unhappiness and eternal happiness—through the prism of communion. Because disposition toward communion is a matter of freedom, the question of paradise and hell is also a matter of freedom, and as such it cannot possibly be rationalized. St. John of Damascus says, "God is not subject to the law; it is what He wants that is good, not what we want, because we are not God's judges."[20] This is a clear affirmation of the superiority of the Person of God vis-à-vis the law; from this also results the superiority of human person. St. John of Damascus also says, "Virtue is the fulfillment of God's law. And God's law is His will . . . God's will is the unchanged good, always the same . . . Evil is . . . the destruction of what exists."[21] What truly *exists* is the divine Person and the human person as His image. St. John of Damascus again says that happiness depends on human beings' will to be in communion with God, as those who do not have this desire bring unhappiness upon themselves. "The righteous too rejoice when they desire God and when they have Him always within them; the sinners punish themselves and have no consolation when they desire sin and do not have the matter [in order to be able] to sin, being consumed as if by fire and by worm. For what is suffering if not the absence of that which is desired?"[22]

The divine judgment can be understood as the entrance of some into communion with God (through His will) or as the nonentrance of others into this communion because of their refusal. But because God does not behave in an entirely passive way, the divine judgment is necessary in order to firmly define created beings' mode of eternal life. Through such a judgment God's personal character, and also His interest in human persons, comes to light. Additionally, the ultimate criterion of good and evil is brought into relief. This criterion is God Himself, and He is also the forum of last resort for this criterion. Otherwise there is neither a criterion of values nor a supreme forum to decide what is good and what is evil. One no longer knows what is good and what is evil, and there is no final forum to decide this matter. The ultimate criterion of good cannot be known except by Him who is Himself goodness. He is the supreme personal reality, the ultimate source of life.

Because it is a matter of communion, God's judgment acquires a totally new meaning. God's judgment, through which some will share in eternal happiness and others will share in eternal unhappiness, only means that God—who is open to all persons, because all are created for communion—finds with regret that some persons do not accept, or have become incapable of accepting, this communion; thus they remain in unhappiness through their own freedom. In the fresco from the exterior wall of Sucevița Monastery in Moldavia, Romania, the souls ascend on steps toward Jesus, who is waiting for them at the top of the ladder. On the upper right side many hosts of angels watch them, while on the lower left side demons watch them. Each step represents a test of one of the possible passions of the soul. The soul found to be possessed by one passion or another falls from the respective step into the abyss, which is agitated by demons, and that soul does not reach communion with Christ. This fall into the dark chasm that corresponds to a certain passion begins already in this earthly life, as a fall into the dark solitude that is absence of communion with Christ, whose love shines forth as light. It is the fall into the sterile hole of egoism, from which no light shines forth and from which no one can exit, because such a person does not want to come out: his weakened will has become accustomed to the illusion that there is freedom in this existence for himself.

But within the framework of this interpretation of paradise and hell, we still must respond to this question: Why, following God's judgment, do those who leave this life without faith in Him—and thus without any openness toward communion with Him, and through Him with other human persons—have to remain eternally in hell? Why does God's evaluation of them (or of the state that God finds them in after death) have as its consequence their eternal fixity in this state?

Thus another question is asked: Do those who leave this life in this situation fall into a state of unhappiness greater than the one they were in here? Are they not capable of ever entering into communion with God and thus of being pulled out of hell?

The Church's teaching that it is possible for some to be drawn out of hell during the time between the individual judgment and the universal judgment permits a fitting response to this question.

According to this teaching, those with some faith—and therefore without an attitude totally contrary to communion with God—who go to hell after the individual judgment will be able to reach a stage at which the capacity for communion that is present in them may be actualized. Therefore this hell implies two possibilities: that for some it will be eternal, and that for others it will be noneternal.

Although we cannot state with certainty for which persons hell will be eternal and for which it will not be eternal, in principle it is possible that hell may not be eternal for some of them.

But the mystery of freedom does not allow us to say that hell will cease to be eternal for all. Those who have not been able to emerge from hell at the time of the universal judgment will never be able to emerge from it.

What basis is there for the fact that those who are left in hell until the universal judgment will forever remain in it, once God never ceases to be a loving God and once they forever maintain a certain freedom? The basis is God's foreknowledge, because of which God knows for sure that they will never respond to His offer of love. This lack of response may occur because they do not want His love or because they created, through their total refusal of communion during their earthly life and during the time between the individual and universal judgments, such a state within themselves that they are no longer capable of accepting communion with God. St. John of Damascus supposes that a lack of the will to desire God cloaks itself with the sinful "changelessness" in which those in hell find themselves. Properly speaking, after death these persons are "changeless": those in paradise cannot be moved from goodness, and those in hell cannot be moved from evil.[23]

The mystery of the fact that some will be able to be taken out of hell before the universal judgment and that others will never come out of it but will pass into the eternal hell together with those living persons who will go there at the moment that the world ends—this is a mystery of man's freedom. It is a mystery concerning his potential to become hardened in a negative freedom that cannot possibly be overcome; it is a mystery that we cannot comprehend.

In our mind it is just as possible for those in hell to want to leave or to not want to do so. Only God can comprehend and know beforehand this mystery, and there is nothing we can do except believe what He has told us through revelation; we must wait to find out only at the last judgment which persons among us will be sent to the eternal hell.

Berdyaev admits that there is a hell that consists in the refusal of communion with God. However, he thinks that this is a subjective hell, not an ontological one, and declares that it is impossible for this hell to last forever. In addition to the fact that it means rationalizing human freedom, his affirmation does not take into consideration the fact that at some point one can no longer make a separation between the subjective and the ontological. A narrow way of thinking, feeling, and regarding things and human persons creates within human nature a certain ontological state and distorts its innermost spirit; Christianity does not say that hell is only an external circumstance that causes torment but also a world of disfigured spirits who are hardened in evil and in a distorted manner of looking at reality.

The subjective (or even imaginative, phantasmagoric) factor's contribution to sustaining the sufferings in hell is indicated by St. John of Damascus when he says that the fire there consists of the passions that do not find the matter to satisfy their desire. For unsatisfied passion torments through its inability to give the images of pleasure a real consistency. As the inability to give these images a reality is prolonged, they increase their enchanting appearances, and through these appearances their tormenting power also increases, given the inability to find real corresponding hypostases. The absence of objects able to satisfy the passions is the objective element of the sufferings in hell. And the phantasmagoric effervescence of passion, sustained in this absence, is the subjective element. Here is what St. John of Damascus says:

> We say that that torment is nothing other than the fire of unsatisfied passion. For those who obtained changelessness in passion do not desire God but sin. But there in that place the commission of evil and sin has no place. For we neither eat nor drink, nor get dressed, nor marry, nor gather wealth, nor does envy or any other evil satisfy us. Therefore, by desiring and not partaking of the things desired, they are burned by passions as if by fire. But those who desire the good—namely, God alone, who *is* and *exists eternally*—and who partake of Him rejoice

> according to the intensity of their desire, according to which they also partake of the Desired One.[24]

This means that the souls that went to hell after death do not bear material torments or a material fire, as a teaching developed especially in Catholic theology holds. It is more about the inability of souls to direct their desire toward communion with God as a spiritual good; such souls remain in a continuous regret that they can no longer enjoy the material pleasures (or those of arrogance) to which they were exclusively accustomed. They cannot obtain a taste of the spiritual delights whose essence is communion with God, the personal reality and the supreme (hypostatic) consistency.

Hell is a double evil: the will to commit sin, and the pain of the inability to commit it. It is attachment to the sin that can no longer actually be committed and thus a refusal to seek out spiritual goods. Through inability the human being is even removed from his relationship with things, and from any egoistic, transitory relationship with another person. Any relation that he has with reality is cut off. He leads a phantasmagoric, nightmarish existence. He is totally imprisoned in the hole of solitude. Only the demons and his passions bite him like serpents. To carry this idea further, it can be said that his subjectivity, grown to monstrous proportions, makes him no longer able to see the reality of others. He can no longer have even sinful, hasty relationships with them. His subjective imagination covers up the reality of objects, because he considers them too humble for his imagination. He falls into a sort of dreamlike existence in which everything becomes chaotic in a senseless absurdity, without any consistency, without any search for an exit out of it, and without any hope for an exit.

Everything is a rigorous and hardened consequence of the sins committed in life. St. Maximus the Confessor described this state in a few disturbing passages, asking why we do not "see, hear, and speak according to nature [or] accustom the eyes, ears, and tongue to this, in order to not have then this darkness and this sepulchral silence."[25] If we did not develop communion, we will obtain the silence of all. If we did not search for the true meaning of things and of persons, we will have the lie and the absurdity; we will have "the worm of hatred" that we cultivated. If we tied our life to passing things, it will lose its consistency together with those things that have passed on like smoke. If we did not extinguish the fire of the passions with abstinence, we will burn in it with nothing to put it out. "We receive the recompense that our own deliberate disposition deserves: the fire of Gehenna is that of hedonism, the eternal darkness is that of the darkness of ignorance and worldly delusion."[26] For the height of empty pride and amusements, we will have the lowest fall and continuous sadness. The lie and the sly insincerity that we cultivated will surround us from all sides. The torments will not consist as much in a simple solitude as in a solitude imposed by the tormenting surroundings. It is a solitude that you defend against serpents that assault you. It does not consist only in the lack of communion, for if we were snakes toward others, others will now be snakes toward us. "A trial harder than any punishment is to be eternally together with those who hate us and those whom we hate . . . and to be separated from those who love or are loved."[27] It is the solitude in which you are gripped by the hostile and ugly faces of others without being able to free your vision and thoughts from them. It is a solitude that lacks any looking inward and any moment of peace; it is sustained by the absence of any word of love or understanding and is surrounded by the mockery and hatred of all. All are tormenting all; all are defending themselves from all.

Florensky says that by closing in on himself, man is altered to such an extent that he is no longer an objective reality for others.[28]

Having become accustomed to no longer being moved when he says "thou," neither is man moved when someone says "thou" to him. He buries himself in total indifference, in death to any relationship. He says nothing except "me, me, me." "No one is 'Thou' for whom no one is 'Thou.'"[29] He no longer is a "thou" for God, neither is God a "Thou" for him. He has become a "husk" (*Schale*), as H. P. Blavatsky called spirits,[30] a "skin" without substance, something illusory and purely subjective; it is because of this that he affirms only himself, with desperation. He who knows no other reality and clings to his own self as the sole reality—without having this in a satisfactory way either—is more obsessed by the "I" than by a phantasm. He has left reality for "the outer darkness," where he sees nothing. No one can give him a true "thou," an objective reality, except communion with God. God gave man the power for that communion, but its development is also dependent upon his contribution. Man cannot give this to himself precisely because this would mean that he was affirming himself and did not want to come out of himself, to forget himself, so that he may exist truly affirmed by others (since he also affirms them) and so that he may exist through God and affirming God.

One could ask this question: Why does God not show Himself to such persons in all His light so that they may see it and depart from their attitude of refusing communion with Him? Why does God leave them in the darkness? The presence of God is not an external reality that imposes itself as such, but it is offered as a loving "Thou." As such it cannot be perceived except through an openness to love that is humble and full of longing. Here a strange phenomenon occurs: he who defends his autonomy becomes stubborn, especially in his refusal to accept someone who, through the love he offers, makes the former realize that his true existence depends on this offer. He who is stubborn in his pride cannot admit something like this, for he cannot admit that someone can love while he cannot. He could admit the reality of someone who depends on him but not that of someone who reveals himself to the stubborn man as the one upon whose endless love the former depends. But he whom the stubborn man acknowledges, with the arrogance that by acknowledging him he gives him existence, no longer wants to offer himself to the former. Thus God cannot make Himself evident as a loving Person to him who does not want to receive Him in this way. Only to the one who desires Him for His love does God manifest Himself as love. That is why St. Isaac the Syrian said that hell is a punishment of love.[31]

To others hell is present under the veil of rigors that appear in a life devoid of love, under the painful consequences of such a life. Even things in which this person seeks pleasure gradually lose their consistency, because they are gifts of God and cannot be possessed completely except by him who has God through love. St. John of Damascus expresses both of these aspects: those who desire God have Him; and those in hell, who became hardened in their lack of desire for God and who only want things that offer them pleasure, have neither God nor those things. They have fallen into total emptiness. This is something that begins during life on earth, at least in that he who no longer has God does not feel, after a while, any pleasure in things either. Properly speaking, he who has God has everything and knows the depth of things.

> He who desires receives. He who is good receives good things . . . The righteous, by desiring and having God, rejoice forever;

> but the sinners, by desiring sin and not possessing the objects of sin, are tormented as if eaten by the worm and consumed by fire, with no consolation; for what is suffering if not the absence of that which is desired? According to the intensity of desire, those who desire God rejoice, and those who desire sin are tormented.[32]
>
> Here on earth when we incline our desire toward other things and obtain them even partially, we find pleasure in them. Over there, however, when "God will be all in all" [1 Cor 15:28] and there will be neither food, nor drink, nor any bodily pleasure, nor any injustice, those who possess neither common pleasures nor anything from God will suffer great pain that is not produced by God, but that we prepare for ourselves.[33]

Thus we have the paradox that it is good to affirm the person, but to egoistically affirm the person outside of communion with God—the supreme personal reality—is evil. St. John of Damascus says this in his response to the following question: Why does God not destroy those who will endure eternal torments instead of letting them suffer in that way?

His answer is that to be is still better than not to be at all. Existence is a gift from God. God manifests His love by eternally offering existence to those in hell. In this way He also shows the permanent value of the human person. If He were to maintain only those in paradise, He would not be showing that He respects the human being (even when the human being opposes Him), and that He therefore respects his freedom. In their own way, those in hell are also a testimony to the value that God accords them. Through their existence God keeps them too in a relationship with Him. He maintains in existence even those who deny Him. Through this He manifests a *kenosis*. On one hand God cannot remove them from their hardened state, from a freedom that denies Him, for by doing so He would have to deprive them of their freedom. On the other hand He does not want to destroy them; this would also devalue their existence and freedom. Between these two alternatives—one that would manifest God's goodness in a more reduced way, and another that would devalue their human freedom in a greater way—God chooses to maintain them in their attitude of refusing Him.

It has been said that such a solution would introduce sadness into even God's inner life; therefore the solution of universal salvation has been offered. But this could not be achieved without disregarding human freedom.

The solution of maintaining them in the state of eternal nonfulfillment would perhaps be no worse than a salvation without communion in freedom. But it has an advantage: that by accepting it God does not just accept the sadness of not seeing all persons in the happiness of communion with Him, but He also manifests the greatness of His generosity both in granting them an existence in eternal opposition to Him and in respecting the freedom that makes man the most wonderful being.

St. John of Damascus boldly says that even the existence of the devil has value in its quality as a gift of God. To the Manichean's question of why God created the devil although He knew that he would become evil, St. John gives the following answer:

> For overwhelming goodness He [God] has made him, for the Lord said: Will I deprive him entirely of the good and of subsistence on account of the fact that he will become evil and will lose all the good things given to him? Not at all. Even if he becomes evil, I will not deprive him of his participation in Me, but I will give him this good: participation in Me through existence, even if he does not want to participate in Me through existence. For no one else retains and sustains those that exist except God . . . All that exist have their existence in God . . . Thus those who have existence do participate partially in the ultimate degree of goodness. Therefore there is something good in the existence of the devil, and through existence he participates in the good.[34]
>
> God eternally offers the good things to the devil, but he refuses to receive them. And in the age to come, God offers the good things to all, for He is the source from which good things flow. But everyone participates in the good inasmuch as he has made himself capable.[35]

Certainly God's judgment, with its eternal effects, hides a great mystery—a mystery at the height of reality for man and God. The great mystery on the part of man is that he can eternally stand before so many signs of God's existence and amidst the greatest sufferings yet remain in an unbearable monotony, and then refuse to accept God; the great mystery is that he does not try the solution of leaving these sufferings behind by accepting communion with Him. He can more readily accept the absence of meaning, the absurdity in everything, than accept meaning through God. This is due to the great temptation of his autonomy. The human person defends his autonomy because through it he believes that he can do anything, that he can satisfy all his desires, which have enslaved him by becoming passions. St. John of Damascus says, "If you say that it would have been better for him [man] not to exist than to suffer eternally, we say that this is nothing other than the fire of the appetite for evil and sin. For those who have reached the changelessness of sin as passion do not desire God."[36]

The eternity of hell indicates the mysterious paradox of the freedom of him who cannot find true life in the freedom of communion, and who therefore does not want to search for it either. And the great mystery on the part of God is that He does not destroy the sinner even though He has foreknowledge of his eternal nonrepentance, but that He instead respects him even in this state. This is man's eternal preservation in relationship with God. Man cannot forget God entirely, nor does God want to forget man, regardless of his condition.

The two mysteries cannot be separated, or God no longer wants them to be separated now that He has created the human being. If God were to destroy the sinner or forget him forever in a gesture of disesteem, the human person would lose the depth of his mystery. Likewise, that depth would also be lost in the relationship between God and man. God cannot make the human person share in happiness against his will, because happiness consists in man's acceptance of His love. But man does not want to receive this love, and it cannot be imposed forcefully. This too would mean emptying man of his mystery. Even through the eternal hell, man's freedom and eternal value are affirmed.[37] If the human person knew that by using his freedom against God's will he would one day be destroyed, he would be limited in his freedom. He is truly free only if he knows that he can eternally oppose God. He is free and has complete dignity only if he knows that he is eternally unconditioned, that is, eternally free. Surely, neither would he be free if he knew that his free affirmation had no consequence. In this case he would not put any fervor into affirming his freedom. Free affirmation also presupposes some risks. But the true risks presuppose that he who assumes them persists in existence.

Even in the attitude of the human being who does not want to know about God and who still cannot entirely forget Him, there is an excruciating suffering, which he detests but from which he cannot escape. Had man completely forgotten about God, he would not suffer, but he would no longer be man either. The divine image is distorted in him, not destroyed. In this there is a depth that only such a person can have. His monotony, eternal inability, and extreme sadness cause endlessly varied forms of suffering, because they are a monotony, inability, and sadness specific to man. If, as St. John of Damascus says, existence remains a gift from God even for those in hell, it cannot be just an empty, neutral husk. Even as a husk existence produces conscious reflection through the fact that it produces sufferings. No matter how hardened this sadness might be, it is a trial; it is still a conscious life, because it is lived by a person.

St. Maximus the Confessor categorically affirms that the soul is active after death, regardless of whether it was good or evil. This is because he considers that without any activity the soul would no longer exist, since its activity is tied to its reality.

> If the soul is logical and noetic because of the body, the body will be held in higher honor than the soul that came into existence by means of it. Then it is from the body that the rational and perceptive powers [*logos* and *nous*] come, as the soul comes from the body. For if without the body the soul cannot perceive or reason, it is only through the body that perception and reason belong to the soul. And if it is from the body that the soul receives the capacity for perception and reason and, as they say, the soul cannot have this capacity without the body, the soul will not be in any way self-existent. For indeed how would it be so without the body, not having in itself that which characterizes it? . . . Therefore, after the dissolution of the body, the soul can only be nothing at all—and especially nothing for those who rave so madly that they deprive the soul of immortality.[38]

St. Maximus supposes that the movement of the soul is good in its quality of movement, just as its existence is good because it is from God; thus he says that just as God does not move, having nothing to move toward, but He instead moves all, so does the soul move its powers. Moreover, it does not move its powers through its will, but it is moved by God to move them. Souls that draw near to God move their powers in constancy with God. Thus it results that, according to St. Maximus, the souls in hell must move their own powers, because they do not possess infinity. But on the other hand, because they do not possess infinity their powers do not move in a stable way, since they are outside God and do not tend toward Him either; instead they move in a tormenting unrest and are not stabilized by God's infinity. The soul in hell must move, but because it does not move toward the true goal in which its movement would be fulfilled and stabilized, its movement (from which it cannot escape) is suffering, since it is meaningless and aimless. Furthermore, such a soul moves from one thing to another without ceasing to exist.

> Through He who in created beings orders all things, the philosophical mind [*nous*], moving the power of its noetic faculties toward the purely Immaterial One, discerns He who moves based on that which is moved. Understanding that He alone is one and simple, only existing through Himself, through the rest [the mind] learns of Him who is infinite by nature, changeless because He is unmovable. For He who creates and brings to fulfillment all beings, and who is above beings, is not evident to created beings . . . Likewise, by means of the diverse and multiple ways that the members and parts are combined together in this microcosm, and by thinking of the cause that moves him, man, I say, knows that it is something other, something essential in comparison with the body's organic existence . . . He considers the simple and the indivisible within the dispersed, the unlimited within the compound, the changing as moved and the moved as having an end toward which it is moved. And he knows the cause of the *tropoi* of this motion, not by nature but by discernment, even though the latter is nevertheless often mistaken.[39]

The eternal existence of the soul even in hell is equivalent to its "spiritual" life. This is so important for St. Maximus the Confessor: that without the soul nothing else would endure. Everything would be in a continuous making and unmaking. Even God would no longer exist, for a god who can no longer create beings with an eternal indestructibility, so that they may eternally think of Him (or contrary to him), would prove to be a god who would be conditioned and limited to a relationship with an eternal impersonal process, with an eternal law of making and unmaking.[40]

But the whole mystery of the suffering in hell, or of hell's content (which can have, even in its monotony, continuously varied reflections in man's consciousness), is not given to us to understand during our earthly life; we may only make conjectures about it from certain shadows that it projects in this life.

The state of those who, as a consequence of the individual judgment, are in the paradise of communion with Christ will be dealt with in another place.

CHAPTER 4

CHRIST AS JUDGE AND THE WITNESSES TO THE INDIVIDUAL JUDGMENT

A. The Author and Criterion of the Individual Judgment

Both the individual judgment and the universal judgment have the same author: Christ. He Himself said, "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

The author of judgment is Christ, not in the sense that He delivers arbitrary sentences in conformity with certain impersonal laws, but in the sense that from Him the life and happiness of full communion pour forth over those who lived according to His example and became like Him. Even in this life, these persons had within themselves all the light and joy of communion with Him. But those who did not follow Him will remain in a definitive absence of the joy of this communion with Him, the Person-source of all divine and human love.

For the first group Christ's judgment means that He appears to them more clearly than ever before in their relationship, and He also shows them all the gifts of His love. For the latter group it means that Christ ceases any attempt to approach them and to take them out of their attitude of refusal toward Him; this is not because He no longer wants to show them His love but because they are hardened in the passions, whose basis is denying and disobeying Him. Up to that point they have heard others speak in His favor; they have met Jesus through those who believed in Him and who urged them to also believe in Him.

From that point on they will no longer hear any such encouraging words because all those around them know very little about Him. All are examples of disobedience toward Him and of disdain for communion with Him. In a hymn from the service for the dying, the Church puts the following words in their mouths: "Already I do not remember God, for no one in hades remembers the Lord. Cruelly, as with a net, I am covered with darkness, awaiting the resurrection of all men."[1] Somehow these persons will realize that their unhappiness constitutes their alienation from God, His retreat from them (which they surely caused); that this unhappiness is their nonconformity with Him; and that therefore He is the criterion and He has had the last word, on account of which they are in this state, since they did not conform to Him and did not live thinking of Him. On the other hand, even now they do not see how He exists in His radiant goodness, and, alongside a certain profound consciousness that He has decided their fate, their ignorance and denial of Him continue to persist in them.

This contradictory duality, of which we spoke before, can be drawn from the declarations of St. John of Damascus, who on one hand says that God continues to share His good things with the devil and with those in hell, who will participate in part in these good things; and on the other hand that the devil and those in hell lack God because they do not desire or love Him.[2]

This duality also follows from the words of St. Maximus the Confessor, who on one hand says that those in hell love (respect) God and are loved by Him, and on the other hand that their greatest torment is that they are separated from Him, or that God turns His face from them since through lies they have created "a rut of lying perversity by moving away from God, who is just and direct."[3] St. Maximus repeats with great frequency the fact that those in hell are in a convoluted state of "crookedness" (σκαμβότητα).

Another Orthodox author[4] states that every soul, even the evil one, comes before God two or three times after death: on the third, ninth, and fortieth days; on the last of these the sentence is pronounced. Between the first and third days the soul passes through tollhouses, between the third and ninth it explores paradise, and between the ninth and fortieth it explores hell. On the fortieth day the Savior decides whether it will be placed in paradise or in hell. But the aforementioned author's only basis for saying this is the Church's memorial services for the dead: these memorial services are offered on these days so that the soul may gain entrance into paradise. Therefore, following these services it is possible that only forgiven souls may come before the radiant face of Christ.

However, St. Symeon the New Theologian says, "For the divinity, which is to say the grace of the all-Holy Spirit, has never appeared to anyone who was without faith; and, if it were to appear by some paradox among men, it would show itself as fearful and dreadful, as not illumining but burning, not as giving life but as punishing dreadfully."[5]

Perhaps between these two affirmations we can find a middle ground, in the sense that in the souls of those going off into unhappiness there is in those days a more acute perception of Christ's goodness that they are lacking, and this fact burns them. This, however, does not mean that they will leave the sinful state, in which they are incapable of Christ and of entering into communion with Him. The human soul is so complex!

The fact that Christ is also man would in principle leave open the possibility that He might manifest Himself to the souls being sent to hell. But when manifesting Himself to these souls, Christ would have to have a countenance devoid of the joyful light that would result from entering into communion with them, a countenance also devoid of the penetrating spirituality of such a communion. Such a manifestation of Christ is difficult to understand. St. Isaac the Syrian allowed for such a manifestation but concluded that even in this Christ does not abandon His love; rather, His love becomes suffering or the fire of Gehenna for those who are rejected.[6] It is a painful love that therefore turns away those who are incapable of responding. But does this procure for them a true knowledge of Christ? Is it not more truly a hiding of Christ, who comforts, enlightens, and saves when He manifests Himself? Is not Christ veiled by the tormented conscience of him who dies in sin? Paradoxically, the awareness of Christ's presence is combined with the inability to see Him in His true reality, just as the envious cannot see the goodness of the envied. This is the "dreadful" Judge.

In the prayer at the parting of the soul, the Church urges the soul that departs from the body to pray to Christ so that He may show Himself to it "for a short time," as evidence that it might not see Him at all: "Shine on me the noetic light, that I might see You, O Christ, for a short time at least. For I do not see You, as a cloud of demons have suddenly fallen upon me, and the darkness of my shameful deeds covers me."[7] At that moment, from the depths of the sinful soul gush out all the memories of sinful deeds, the full awareness of its passions, and the demons that possessed and completely darkened it.

Through another hymn that depicts the soul's words upon its exit from the body, the Church speaks of a presence of Christ that is directed toward those who will be sent to hell, a distant and unrevealed presence: "Sigh together now, all you ends of the earth, for me the wretched one, and weep together. For the cruel sentence has come from above, my hands are tied, and my feet are bound."[8] Using similar words, St. Symeon Metaphrastes says, "When no one is there to help you, the voice from above will be heard: 'Take the unbeliever away so that he may not see the glory of the Lord.' The divine, luminous angels will depart from you with sadness and grief and will abandon you into the hands of evil and hostile demons, to their joy."[9] The soul will feel abandoned by any good help from above.

However, St. Symeon the New Theologian, after reiterating that divine grace is not accessible to sinners, says that they will experience the day of the Lord as fire. Then he says, "However, this fire which is God will not appear in an entirely spiritual manner but, one might say, as bodilessly embodied (ἀσωμάτως ἐν σώματι)."[10] It is a manifestation devoid of grace, a manifestation like fire, lacking intimacy; it is a distant manifestation, not in a bodily manner but a spiritual one, in which the fire is felt more than the Person of Christ. In the fire of this burning manifestation, His Person is still felt, but in a distant way, as if wanting to remain outside the relationship.

St. Symeon the New Theologian says that upon the soul's departure from the body, any person who has the grace of Christ is worried that he will not see Christ, because even though he had Christ in him during his earthly life, he could not have Him completely. "So I ask, Master, thus I call upon You then to give to me also Your compassion, my Savior, when my soul goes out of the body, to be able with a single breath to put to shame all who are against me Your servant, all who intend to attack me, and so that I can pass over unharmed, protected by the light of Your Spirit, and stand before Your judgment seat, having Your divine grace present to me, Christ, sheltering me and rendering me wholly without shame."[11] But those who do not have the grace of the Spirit will say,

> For who would dare to be seen before You if they had not put on Your grace, if they did not possess it within and had not been illuminated by it? How would anyone at all be able to contemplate Your unendurable glory? For how will a human being, humble human nature, be able to look upon the glory of God and the nature of divinity? . . . Who among us will ever be able to see Him by their own power or energy, if He does not send His divine Spirit, and by the Spirit provide for one's weakness of nature, strength, might, and power, and make the person capable of contemplating His divine glory? For otherwise no one among human beings will contemplate nor be able to see the Lord coming in glory, and thus the unjust will be separated from the just, and all the sinners shall be covered with darkness, however many do not have the light in them here below.[12]

Those who go to hell consider deprivation of communion with Christ sometimes as coming from their egoistic passions, and sometimes as coming from His mercilessness. It is proper to those immersed in any passion from which they cannot escape to seek fault with someone else, not with themselves, and in the final analysis with God, even though at times the thought of their own guilt gushes out from the depths of some remaining part of their conscience. "And the others, I have not yet known nor have I been known by them . . . because of this they say that I am harsh, they call Me unsympathetic, the children of the unjust one name Me Unjust."[13] Thus the expression "dreadful Judge" that we use for Christ has its cause in our guilty subjectivity.

If the unhappiness of those in hell means the permanent establishment of their attitude toward Christ—of their refusal to enter into communion with Him during their earthly life, of their refusal to move toward the goal of human fulfillment that Christ, as our model and focal point, achieved for us—then the happiness of those in paradise is the crowning point of their communion with Christ, of living with Him, of their gradual imprinting with Christ's humanity during their life on earth.

The criterion according to which the eternal state will be finalized will be our effort, or lack thereof, to draw near to Him, with our aim being the perfected humanity that Christ realized as a man. Thus Christ does not get this criterion from outside, but He Himself is this criterion. He is the standard for the judgment, and He is the one applying this standard because He alone achieved it, as its model, and He knows it perfectly from within Himself. Moreover, not only is He the criterion and the Judge but also the crown with which He, as Judge, rewards those who made the effort to rise toward His level as man, being fulfilled by Him through His perfected humanity.

That is why all judgment has been given to Jesus Christ. If one can speak of a right He has earned to exercise this quality, this ought to be understood in the sense that by assuming and raising our humanity to our exemplary quality through His cross, Resurrection, and Ascension, He has raised in Himself humanity's firstfruits to the place where they should be. Through His dwelling in those who believe, He has given them the help they need to die to the old man and to become alive forever through virtues; He has done everything so that men may attain the pinnacle of humanization, where He is. On the other hand He has this right because only in Him could this humanization truly attain its eternal pinnacle. He is Judge in His quality as guide and supporter on the path of humanization, in His quality as the goal and as its achievement in those in whom this advancement has taken place. He is the way and the life, our supporter and crown.

This honor given to Him is at the same time an honor given to man. By glorifying Him as supreme Judge, as decisive forum of our eternal fate, we honor one from among ourselves, and we honor as the supreme criterion the level of humanity that all of us who glorify Him attain, in and through Him. We are judged according to a criterion attained by man, by a man who has done everything so that we too may arrive there and who, by means of judgment, shares with us the level He reached—if on our part we offer our cooperation with Him in order to reach that level. Not only will human beings have happiness in Him but also the angels, just as those who will not recognize Him will have unhappiness. In this sense of conforming or not conforming with Him as the criterion of our fate, we should understand the words of the Holy Apostle Paul: "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9–11). This glory of His is preserved as an inheritance for the saints, that is, for those who believe in Him and who strive, with the help of His power that is in them, to become like Him (Eph 1:18).

Christ's judgment—or the eternal crowning with His glory of those who cooperated with His power that dwelled in them, and the absence of this crowning for those who did not receive Him, with the consequence for both groups being participation or nonparticipation in His perfected humanity—is an important driving force in sustaining humanity's progress toward its perfection within the divine absolute.

In other words, this judgment makes Christ's perfect humanity, which is rooted in the divine absolute, the driving force behind our progress toward true perfection in humanity. Christ's judgment means that there is a difference between the order of values with an absolute significance and the disorder of nonvalues or of pretended values; it also means that the absolute values are those that lead to full humanity, which is in God incarnate, and that one can live in this order and can reach the paradise of these values' perfected realities.

Without such a judgment all human beings throughout history are destined either to successively fall into nothingness or to evolve, with rises and falls, or only with advances within the relative plane. Through its continual monotony this relative plane will end up revealing itself as being not far from hell, principally because progress in a bodiless spirit also has the disadvantage of not being able to satisfy the desires—even if they are only passing—that can be satisfied in the body. There is nothing outside Christ's judgment except hell; His judgment offers those who accept it the opportunity to escape nonbeing or hell. Namely, either Christ and His judgment exist, in which case those who believe in Him escape nonbeing or hell; or Christ and His judgment do not exist, in which case every personal reality is condemned to disappearance or hell, which is the same as the lack of any meaning whatsoever. Based on St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John of Damascus, the consciousness of those in hell (although it is so interrupted and although they contest it at every turn) that they are there as the result of Christ's judgment gives their existence a sliver of meaning, which makes it superior to nonexistence or to an eternal evolution in relativity.

We cannot live without knowing that we are connected with an absolute criterion, which cannot be anything but the supreme Person of God, who on one hand became accessible in Christ as man, and who on the other hand remained perfect in His love. The criterion according to which the fate of human beings is finalized is at once perfect humanity and the absoluteness of the divine Person, or humanity that has been perfected, transformed, and made eternal in this way, because it is in the bosom of the eternal divine Person.

The happiness to which those who had Christ in them go, being the unveiled fullness of communion with Him, is on one hand an incomparable gain, and on the other hand a continuation of the communion they had during life on earth. No one insists on this fact more than St. Symeon the New Theologian. But like all the Fathers, he too views the greatness of the state after death so highly that he does not make a clear distinction between this state and the one after the resurrection:

> For the coming of the Lord has already taken place and is ever taking place in the faithful, and is at hand for all who desire it . . . Nor will this be only in the age to come, but first in this life, then later in the future age as well. And if here more obscurely and there more perfectly, still the believers do see plainly and receive here-below, already, the first fruits of all that is beyond. For while they do not receive all the promises here-below, yet neither do they remain without any portion or taste of the things to come by hoping for everything there and merely existing here. Rather, since it is indeed through death that God arranged to give us the kingdom of the Resurrection, and incorruptibility and all of life everlasting, yet we are already, without a doubt, become in soul partakers and communicants here-below of the future good things, are as it were incorruptible and immortal and sons of God and sons of light and of the day, heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. We clearly carry it around within us, because it is right here already that we receive it all by the perception and knowledge of our soul, unless we are in some respect untried with respect to our faith or lacking in our keeping of the divine commandments. In the body, however, we do not yet receive it. Just as Christ God before His resurrection, we carry around our body as corruptible, and, encompassed and bound by it with respect to our soul, we cannot now accommodate receiving the entire glory which has been revealed to us. In reflecting that ineffable ocean of glory, we believe we see a single drop of it, and for that reason say that for the moment we see as in a mirror and

obscurely [I Cor 13:12], yet we do see ourselves spiritually as like Him Whom we see and Who sees us even in this present life. After the Resurrection, though, just as He Himself raised His own body from the tomb transformed by His divine power, so shall we, too, all receive our body as itself spiritual, and, having first been likened to Him in our soul, we shall then become like Him in both soul and body. This is to say that we shall be like Him, human beings by nature and gods by grace, just as He Himself is indeed God by nature Who in His goodness has taken on the nature of man.[14]

Those in happiness will be close to Christ, not physically but spiritually. They will be close "to innumerable angels in festal gathering . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb 12:22–23); they will be found in the multitude of those standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white clothes (that is, radiating only purity) and holding in their hands the palm branches of eternity while glorifying the Lamb, fully conscious that salvation comes from Him and that their life is due to His meekness and life (Rev 7:9–10). They will be in "the courts of the Lord," in "the sweetness of paradise," in "the courts of the righteous," all expressions for the communion with Christ and with all who are in Christ.

The Church prays to God for the deceased as follows: "In the place of Your rest, O Lord, where all Your saints repose, give rest also to the soul of Your servant." This rest is found in the infinity of Christ's love, toward which the movement of him who believes in Him strives. It is "the happy life." Properly said, Christ is "the life and the repose" of the soul. In Christ man rediscovers his initial state of purity and communion, or he develops the image into the likeness, which is actualizing his full humanity in God. All Christ's salvific works are mentioned in the funeral hymns as works whose salvific fruit is asked for so that it may also be imparted to the deceased person. The Incarnation is mentioned so that Christ's love for human beings may be invoked, in particular the Resurrection by which He conquered our death.

But these good things are not given as a certainty for the deceased person. All the hymns ask that Christ forgive the deceased person, for there is no man who lives and does not sin; only through the forgiveness given by Christ's judgment will he who leaves this life partake of the happy life. This is why the entire funeral service is made up of prayers, not of declarations. Thus Christ's judgment is not only a crowning of those who lived in Him with the crown of full communion with Him, nor is it only a finding of the others' inability for this communion, but it is also an occasion for manifesting Christ's mercy toward the sins that the person most certainly committed. All the prayers and hymns from the funeral service are based on this faith in Christ's power to forgive sins at the judgment, as well as on His mercy. Christ's judgment does not only consist in a passive ruling, made according to these souls' intrinsic characters when the souls are separated from the body, but also in an act of power to forgive their sins.

Undoubtedly, in the first place Christ takes into consideration the character or the fundamental, intrinsic disposition that the souls gained during life on earth, but this disposition is often so full of ambiguities, so mixed with impure elements and weaknesses, that it leaves plenty of room for Christ's decision to manifest itself. Perhaps Christ always gives a favorable ruling when He knows that thereby He can make the disposition of the soul quite clear in a positive way. This ruling often creates a resolutely good disposition, and Christ alone knows when this could take place through His favorable judgment.

However, we should comment that while the Holy Fathers make Christ's judgment dependent upon human beings' works during their lives on earth, the funeral prayers and hymns—imbued with pity for him who departs, and with a humble understanding of human weakness—place the emphasis almost exclusively on Christ's forgiveness. They shine a brighter light upon Christ's active role at the judgment, and they do so in order to affirm the hope that Christ will make use of His mercy in forgiving the deceased.

Certainly, both attitudes are necessary: (1) the Church Fathers' insistence that the life of the Christian faithful conform with Christ so that they may obtain salvation, and (2) the hope that the prayers of the Church place in Christ's forgiving mercy. The Church reconciles the rigidity of the first attitude with the comfort of the latter so as to keep the Christian alert in his duty to work out his salvation, but also to give him hope in Christ's mercy. As much as man strives for a life of virtue, he can never reach a totally sinless state—if he were to pretend that he could, he would be mistaken—and as much as he sins, he can hope in God's mercy, if he repents.

Exhortations toward virtue, with the argument that salvation depends on it, are addressed to the human being while he is alive; prayers for the forgiveness of sins are offered for him who can no longer do anything, with the awareness that no one is able to fulfill the Lord's commandments in such a way that salvation would come to him as a deserved right. The Church does pedagogical work as well as giving comfort and has grounds for both: Christ forgave the thief on the cross who repented, and He also insisted on works of love, both in the Sermon on the Mount when speaking of the last judgment and on other occasions. There is no contradiction between the fact that Christ decides the fate of the soul according to its state and the fact that the soul can be forgiven (if there is repentance), because in both cases Christ stands with arms open to him who wants to enter into communion with Him. This is true whether someone prepared for this for his entire life or awakened to this desire through his repentance at the end.

In fact, in the writings of the Fathers the value of the soul's repentance before death is not entirely unstressed, not to mention the insistence with which they emphasize the importance of repentance throughout one's entire life. Thus, in general, they make eternal happiness dependent upon good and pure works, on the virtues, which as repeated good and pure works are inscribed in the soul as habits, as features of the image that is similar to Christ's, as permanent openness toward communion with Christ and with one's neighbors. But they also make eternal happiness dependent upon repentance throughout a person's entire life (or at least at the end of his life), because such repentance destroys the old man, hardened in sin and in egoism, by creating the new one who is in communion with Christ. According to St. John of Damascus, the deciding factor is the state in which the soul departs this life: either withdrawn into the egoism of pleasures and of its arrogance, or open to the firm desire toward communion with Christ, with the conviction that only in Him is there happiness. Thus repentance at the end of one's life, as the desire for communion with Christ, brings about salvation. But it also works the other way: falling from communion with Christ, through specific sins against Him, brings perdition to him who all his life strived for virtue: "After death there is no change, [but] not because God will not accept repentance. For He cannot negate Himself, nor can He renounce mercy. But the soul itself cannot change. Therefore, even if someone were to fulfill all righteousness and then, reversing course, commit sin and leave this world desiring sin, he would die in sin. Likewise, if the sinner repents and dies in his repentance, his sins will not be remembered."[15]

Repentance, if it is strong, produces the softening of the soul's hardened state, the softening of the arid soil, and brings it to a fertile state. Repentance melts the frozen waters of the river that is our soul, making it flow, in order to quench the thirst of all who approach it, so that they may be made alive again. That is why all the ascetical texts connect repentance to tears, which are the sign of a person's softening. Symeon Metaphrastes says that in repentance is comprised all that the Savior wants, and that the Kingdom of Heaven depends on it: "All the variety of the divine commandments is comprised in this. Do you see, O soul, how much repentance can do?"[16] Thus the demons' greatest fight is against repentance. They use the weapons of desperation and pride against it. In repentance there is flexibility, life, and spiritual youth; in its absence there is death. He who departs this life hardened or "dead" will be hardened for eternity. The movement in him will be a movement by which he eats himself up inside; he will be his own sleepless worm.

The attitude that requires the cultivation of virtues throughout life and the attitude that places its hope in Christ's forgiveness can be reconciled in the exhortation that man strive as much as possible to follow Christ during his entire life, but that he should not despair due to all that he did not fulfill out of the weakness that is inevitably linked to human nature; instead, he should repent and ask for forgiveness. There are, however, cases when a man who does not behave like this awakens at the end of his life to a repentance that fills his soul with trust in Christ and with love for Him, and this person is more filled with love and trust than someone else who has cultivated "righteousness" during the course of his entire life. Certainly, this does not mean that any human being should consciously continue living in sin with the thought that he will make everything right by repenting at the end. For this might make him accustomed to superficiality, a habit just as hardened in his soul as the trust in his own righteousness.[17]

In any case, the prayers and hymns asking that the deceased person be forgiven presuppose his repentance at least in the final moments of his life, or the soul's departure from the body in a repentant state, which we believe will be continued after death. Therefore, among these prayers and hymns offered by those present, some are offered on behalf of the deceased, and, even in the same hymn, the subject is sometimes the deceased, sometimes those present there. The prayers at the parting of the soul in particular are offered on behalf of the deceased, expressing his repentance during the moments immediately prior to the parting of the soul.

B. Witnesses, Accusers, and Defenders at the Individual Judgment

Jesus Christ needs witnesses at the judgment of the soul. This is not because He alone would not know the whole truth about any soul but because He wants to leave no doubt about the righteousness of His judgment in those who are interested in the fate of that respective soul.

The first witness is the conscience of the person being judged. Never is man so face-to-face with his conscience than at that moment. Not even a friend will be able to console him without a basis in the conscience of the person being judged. In the case of those condemned to eternal noncommunion with Christ, this means the acknowledgement on their part that they are not in fact capable of communion with Christ and their neighbors. Beyond that they will remain in a sort of turmoil due to the fact that this noncommunion results in unhappiness, because they still do not understand the link between noncommunion and unhappiness. On the other hand, in a paradoxical way they realize that their unhappiness is due to noncommunion, but they are not able to abandon the state of refusing it.

Therefore, in a way their conscience condemns them, and they find themselves in a state of suffering. Due to their lack of communion and the deeds contrary to communion, their conscience condemned them and tormented them to a certain degree even during life on earth. But this state was still veiled by certain contacts and superficial pleasures. As the state of noncommunion (and thus its torment as well) becomes definitive from the moment of death, from that moment the tormented state of noncommunion also becomes fully evident to the conscience. A Philokalic writer, Theognostos, says, "Strive to receive a sure, unequivocal pledge of salvation in your heart, so that at the time of your death you will not be distraught and unexpectedly terrified. You have received such a pledge when your heart no longer reproaches you for your failings and your conscience stops chiding you because of your fits of anger . . . and when you await death, which most people dread and run away from, calmly and with a ready heart."[18]

The very fact that the soul will see itself as unwelcome in any communion will place before its conscience, in a more visible manner, its own incapacity for communion; it will realize that it created this incapacity on its own. Thus Christ's judgment is not separate from the judgment of one's own conscience. Everything will come before the conscience and will undoubtedly be made evident at that critical moment of passing from this life, because the person will fully acknowledge that he did not become worthy of communion.[19] The greatest tragedy is that at the same time he will realize that the habit of noncommunion he developed is so hardened that he cannot soften it even then. Not even then will he be convinced that Christ truly exists as an inexhaustible source of life and that his happiness depends on Him, once he cannot communicate with Him.

The spiritual writings say a lot about the presence of demons and angels at the moment of judgment or before the sentence is pronounced. *The demons bring forth the evil deeds of the deceased, and the angels the good deeds.* The demons appear before the deceased's sensitized conscience in order to torment him, in case through his deeds he has enclosed himself in his incapacity for communion with Christ; or in order to make him wait, holding his breath, for the salvation from Christ, that is, to have recourse to His mercy. For such a person, the last opportunity to be purified through repentance is when his reprehensible deeds are brought before his conscience.

The demons are not as much witnesses as dreadful accusers; they exaggerate the mistakes made by the deceased, if these are not too grave and the demons feel that these mistakes might be overlooked. But precisely through this, by increasing his fear, they cause him to direct all his hope toward Christ. Therefore, from one point of view, the end result of their accusations is a good one. For the demons are quickly driven away from the soul that hopes in Christ by the good angels, who strengthen the conscience and offer courage.[20] The demons do all this based on the fact that they carefully and greedily retain all the bad deeds and thoughts of the persons they tempt, and they follow them from the air that they invisibly fill, according to the words of the Holy Apostle Paul (Eph 6:12; 2:2). For just as there is no material emptiness in creation, neither is there any point empty of spiritual forces, whether they are good or bad, or of their action. The demons are neither in the divine transcendent plane nor in the human material reality, but between these two.

From this intermediate plane the demons seek to take us out of our concrete reality and at the same time to hinder us from being united with the divine reality. They create confusion through unreal, disordered, and deceitful constructions; they are our tempters through the phantasmagoric world of various images that are made exaggeratedly attractive or repulsive, or of various deceptive abstractions. They try to take us out of the state of watchfulness, deceiving us with attractive images, with dreams and unsecured hopes, challenging us to foolish actions. Without revealing the mysterious but real depth of things and the good (but hard to obtain) results of our efforts, they cover these things and persons with superficial and tempting beauty or with exaggerated and repugnant ugliness, and they promise easy successes in our thoughtless and daring actions. They attract us into the plane of the inconsistent, unstable, and phantasmagoric "air" so that we might exit the solid reality and the narrow path of the tiring climb toward the true good, which is communion with God as the supreme personal reality and with our neighbors. They are the enemies of seriousness and responsibility, deceiving us with everything that is pleasurable: entertaining distractions, easy success, and superficial thinking. They are our invisible leaders on the easy slope of falling from the humanity that is maintained and developed through watchfulness and unceasing weariness. As they fell from the true height of the angels, so do they seek to lower us from the true humanity or to impede us from achieving it, thwarting the grand plan of creation and of God's salvation.

St. Maximus the Confessor says, "In all things let us call to mind death and the soul's terror upon its exit from the body, and how the powers of the air and the forces of darkness will come to meet it, [leaving it] entirely divided and cut into pieces [heightening within it all its contradictions and uncertainties] in proportion to its ill-fated familiarity with them through acting out the passions."[21] He also says, "Carefully examining [the supremely good things], we reflect upon the way to tread toward them and upon what they are for us. For we know that there is a multitude of invisible witnesses of what we do and think, [witnesses] who are present and do not look solely at appearances but at the soul itself, and there they test what is hidden in the heart. For truly a multitude of choirs of angelic powers surround us on all sides, noting precisely what we do and think, even the simplest thought, in order to test us on the dreadful day of judgment."[22] He advises us to use "the thought of the evil spirits that will search the conscience in that air" as our help in avoiding evil things.[23]

The demons plunge the souls that departed from their bodies without repenting even further into this confusion united with stubbornness, into the darkness of pseudo-reality and of the absence of a clear knowledge of themselves, making them advance further in the state of superficial dissipation in which they lived. Hell could not be anything but the ultimate accentuation of this inconsistent spiritual "air," which represents neither the real world (as a springboard for any serious and conscientious action), nor the "heaven" of supreme values to which the world should be raised. The demons cannot lead these souls "into heaven" because neither they nor the souls have access there. Their evilness and superficiality lead those who obeyed the demons in life to this pseudo-existence, transplanting them from one inconsistent and phantasmagoric plane to another that is even more inconsistent but in continuity with the former. These two planes appear connected monotonously to each other as a finite act is connected to an infinite act in some obscure, tormenting, and boring nightmares. Hell's nightmares can no longer be escaped either through suffering or through suicide, due to the absence of the body, that is, because after the resurrection the body will be incorruptible. It is a nightmarish incorruptibility that cannot be dispelled, because one cannot go back to a consistent reality. If in the spiritual writings hell is often called a darkened and tenebrous land, a "land of eternal darkness,"[24] this might mean the permanent establishment of existence in this chaotic kaleidoscope of inconsistent and meaningless images, a kaleidoscope in which those who go to hell were accustomed to living because of their egoism on earth, and out of which it is impossible to exit. In this sense one can understand the belief that in a split second the dying see all the evil things they had done during life, and this troubles and frightens their vision, for through all these images the spirits that had drawn them in become transparent.

Hell would thus be the permanent establishment of this vision, as well as its maximum accentuation.

St. Symeon Metaphrastes says that the evil spirits appear before the sinful soul before its departure from the body, and God's judgment upon it is pronounced then if it does not want to repent. The sensitization of the soul is accentuated to the degree in which its ties to the body are weakened, whether in one direction or the other. The evil soul begins from now on to experience its aloneness before the enmity of these spirits, while the good one begins to feel the presence of angels and of God more intensely. "There is no one to save you then from this tribulation and need, no one to help you: neither mother, nor father, nor brother, nor friend, for no one will see this except you alone. Only to you will they appear."[25] The spirits will take the soul, strike it, laugh at it; the heads of different forms of torture will argue among themselves as to which place of torment they should take it, each one claiming the soul for its own place if the soul was possessed by many passions. The nightmarish images will be more uniform or more manifold according to how someone was possessed: by more unilateral or more varied passions.

In the affirmation that judgment is pronounced even before the departure of the soul, we should presumably see God's foreknowledge that this soul, although it wants to repent or to give a certain sign in this direction, does not and will not repent wholeheartedly.

In fact, the states of souls departing their bodies are so varied and complex that the Church has avoided giving overly simplified formulations about what happens to them. Good angels appear around the soul that was not totally hostile to communion with Christ and unwilling to repent, that is, the soul that does desire to enter into communion with Him and with all who are in communion with Him. The angels come to strengthen this soul against the fear that is due to the sins it committed during life, sins that the evil spirits reveal and exaggerate. If the soul rejoices in the angels' presence, this means that the communion between this soul and the angels has already begun, and therefore this soul has become capable of communion with Christ, whose messengers appear to the soul. Thus, the angels manage, together with the soul, to send away the evil and hostile spirits that want to lock the soul in loneliness and in the desperation connected with it.

These angels do not come from the air and do not take the soul to the hell related to this air, but they come from heaven and take the soul to paradise, which is none other than the heaven of saved creatures who have arrived before God. Only the demons were thrown down from heaven (Luke 10:18; Rev 12:7–11). The angels are in the most intimate communion with Christ and take the soul there: "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb 12:22–23). Numerous places in Holy Scripture show that the angels are in heaven, or in the most intimate proximity to God. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt 18:10). "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels" (Rev 5:11). "And all the angels stood round the throne . . . and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God" (Rev 7:11). And those who on earth fulfilled the commandments of Christ will be after death "like angels of God in heaven" (Matt 22:30). Between heaven and earth there is a direct connection. The angels do not have to go "through the air" in order to come to earth, and the human beings on earth have Christ within them, and to a certain extent they have heaven itself, as a pledge, in the Person of Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Thus after death they can easily be taken to heaven, where Christ is (Phil 1:23). As the dwelling of angels and of the righteous who are in communion with Christ, heaven is the plenitude of existence, because in it they partake of "He who is" truly. Heaven has an endless stability and plenitude of existence, and those who are there also have stability and plenitude of existence. They "[receive] a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb 12:28) because they partake of God, "He who is" truly, He who has an infinite depth, He who does not lack life, because He is the infinite personal reality—better said, the Trinity of Persons in perfect unity and love. Heaven is the shining forth of this infinite plenitude of existence in the Holy Trinity, the source of perfect love. If the evil of those in hell is a minimal participation in the existence that is from God, then the good of those in heaven is the plenitude of participating in God, the infinitely existing One, in the maximum—we could say infinite—degree that creatures endowed with spirit can possibly participate. "For *to be* is not from us but only from God,"[26] "and evil is an absence in existence."[27] That is why those who believe in Him shall find "rest" in Him, while the others will not enter this rest, or will find no rest at all (Heb 4:1–11).

The bridge between our life on earth and the one in heaven is our strengthening through the virtues, which are openings toward God and toward our fellow human beings, with the help of divine grace. The ladder from earth to heaven is the progress in goodness, if the perfect good is God, the perfect existence. The steadiness gained through the virtues leads us to the steadiness of heavenly life, or to the steadiness in the good we have accomplished. For in good is shown the solidity of existence and the harmony of all that exists, within the universal existence. At the same time the good, with its unceasing possibility for development, reveals the infinite depth and the ever-greater beauty of existence, in contrast with the spasmodic repetition of evil. Because the tendency toward the good is inscribed in the very nature created by the good God, heaven is given potentially in the heart, even though it needs God's help in order to be consciously actualized, since it is essentially communion. The virtues as forms of the good are nothing other than the human forms of God's attributes. "Meanwhile, the modes of the virtues and the principles of those things that can be known by nature have been established as types and foreshadowings of those future benefits. It is through these modes and principles that God, who is ever willing to become human, does so in those who are worthy. And therefore whoever, by the exercise of wisdom, enables God to become incarnate within him or her and, in fulfillment of this mystery, undergoes deification by grace, is truly blessed, because that deification has no end."[28] In an exemplary way this has been accomplished by Christ, God become man. And we can accomplish this through the power of Christ, having Him within us: "There can be no doubt that the one Word of God is the substance of virtue in each person. For our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the substance of all the virtues."[29]

Properly speaking, Christ is the bridge between earth and heaven, and we can integrate ourselves into this bridge from here, moving on it together with its movement, advancing firmly and steadily along it, without abandoning either the bridge or ourselves. Thus there is continuity between our life on earth and the life in heaven. If we consistently walk the line of this life's authentic aspirations, we reach its ultimate consistency, which is in heaven, or in God. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "The door of the Kingdom of Heaven will not open if we do not knock at the door by practicing the virtues [of our steadfastness in the good through our deeds]."[30] We will not fully attain the likeness of Christ through His imprinting on us if we did not strive in this direction during life on earth. "This is how we prepare ourselves to be ready for good, so that through the virtues we receive, as a divine coloring, the near likeness to God. [The virtues are not an individualistic matter but a dialogue with God, in which we call upon God and He responds by coming to us.] This is how he who is not unaware of how to invoke God properly invokes Him. The invocation is the authentic approach to God through the virtues; being ready is the light of the virtues upon the righteous . . . Thus we will be able to be fully clothed in white garments, as it is written [Rev 3:4, 5, 18]."[31]

The angels know these white robes, these reflections of our purity, and they receive us into their communion, for they too have these white robes; that is, from them there also shines forth the sincerity of communion, as it does from us. And thus do they lead us.

In this way the angels too are witnesses and defenders of those who washed their robes in the pure blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14), cleansing their blood's tendency toward sin with His pure blood, full of the tendency toward communion with us; they are cleansed with the blood of Him who died for sin (or for egoism), Him of whom they partook to their benefit. The angels will lead them around the Lamb, and they all will walk together after Him wherever He goes (Rev 14:4), thinking with Him, feeling with Him, and rejoicing with Him, the ultimate source of meekness and sacrifice.

Not only do the good angels have a role in sealing a soul's fate but also all the saints, headed by the Lord's Mother, as well as the Church on earth. The eternal fate of a human soul is close to the heart of any spiritually advanced created being. The Lord's Mother, the martyrs, and the saints are all asked in the funeral hymns to beseech Christ to have mercy on the deceased and to save him from the eternal labors or torments.

There is a strong faith that Christ, who became man out of mercy for all human beings so that He may save all (1 Tim 2:4), unite all, and reconcile all in Himself (Col 1:20; Eph 1:10), in His all-loving heart—that is, so that all may return to the mutual love to which He urged us (John 15:12)—rejoices in and takes into account this manifestation of love from all on behalf of the soul that is on the verge of eventual eternal damnation. The Church on earth tearfully prays to Christ and asks the angelic world, as well as the Church in heaven, to join her in an immense or cosmic prayer to Christ so that He may give rest to the soul of the departed along with the host of the righteous. All the living who are gathered around the body of the departed think of his weaknesses with understanding; they are totally inclined to forgive him, for they also think of their own weaknesses and ask for Christ's forgiveness so that they too may be forgiven. It is not the lamentation for having lost a relative, an acquaintance, or a helpful and valuable person that principally dominates those gathered on this occasion—that is, not the thought of the past or of the hardships they are left with—but the tearful prayers that he be forgiven, not condemned to eternal labors. The deceased continues to exist, and his future fate preoccupies them first and foremost; this is in their heart more than the regret for the one who was. The funeral service is the manifestation of everyone's love for the departed, of their reconciliation with him, and of their prayer for his eternal life in happiness. All desire eternal happiness for the deceased, without any shadow of envy, because they see him in the state of ultimate powerlessness, in need of God's mercy and the prayers of his fellow human beings. "Come, brethren, let us give the last kiss unto the dead."[32] The Son of God, whose mercy toward mankind drove Him to become man, sees His mercy bearing fruit in the mercy of all for their brethren. The Church strongly believes that this collective mercy and prayer, which springs forth from the mercy of the Son of God who became man for us and from trusting in His mercy, must have an effect at the judgment of Christ. The entire Church on earth—for the priest, who has alongside him the Church community, represents the entire Church with which he is in communion—and the Church in heaven are united in prayer around a person's soul. This demonstrates the priceless value of a person, as well as the importance of the communion of the Church. Every funeral service is an opportunity to strengthen the unity of the Church in love. The Church's sobornicity is an extremely important affirmation for the eternal fate of every soul. The Holy Apostle Paul urged us to "pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication with all the saints" (Eph 6:18), that is, with all the members of the Church. And as in the Church that prays, the Spirit Himself prays, or in the Church's solidarity as a body Christ Himself is found, it can be said that through His Holy Spirit Christ Himself moves the Church to again and again unite in prayer for every soul of a deceased believer. This is because the Church desires to forgive and save him, if he had faith in Christ's power to save him and if he sees in the prayer of many persons for him that he was not completely unfruitful in their lives.

The saints' and angels' interest in the salvation of every soul that strived to live according to Christ's will, or that at the end of its life showed that it desired communion with all in Christ by repenting, must be explained by the additional joy that this soul brings into the universal communion.

The bosom of Abraham, or the courts of the righteous who are under the same light of Christ and who are warmed by the same love of Christ, signifies the union of all in Christ's love. He who loves Christ does not experience Him as an object but as another subject, as the Subject from whom the endless love, the source of every love, shines forth. But to experience another as a subject means to experience him in yourself as a subject of your subject, as moving your subject. In this sense the Holy Apostle Paul says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). And this occurs in every love. All those whom I love are subjects in myself, without being confused among themselves and without me being confused in them. But among all whom I experience as subjects in myself, the central, leading subject, the source who pours forth an infinite will for communion, is Christ. With His great love for me, He makes me experience all as subjects within myself, because He experiences them as subjects within Himself. Through the paramount intensity of Christ's presence within me, I am able to experience the presence of all the others in me as subjects. And when I experience another person in whom Christ is so intensely felt as a subject, through faith, through him I can also experience Christ as a subject. But it is the Holy Spirit who makes Christ a subject in me, or who opens me up as a subject to Christ and who unites all persons with Christ within me.

St. Maximus the Confessor speaks at length in his writings about this reciprocal interiority between me and Christ, and all in Christ, that is achieved through love. He says that love "levels off and makes equal any inequality or difference in inclination in anything, or rather binds it to that praiseworthy inequality, by which each is so drawn to his neighbour in preference to himself and so honors him before himself . . . and is gathered to the one singleness and sameness, in accordance with which nothing is in anyway separated from what is common to all, so that each is in each, and all in all, or rather in God and in others."[33] This love that makes all as one and in which virtues culminate is not possible unless God is in it as the principal and generative subject. "This is the door, through which the one who enters finds himself in the Holy of Holies, and is made worthy to behold the unapproachable beauty of the holy and royal Trinity."[34] For only a love that unites the lovers with the beloved sees in the latter the endless depths that are rooted in the love of the Holy Trinity. Abraham received man as God, being raised up to God because he "relinquished the individuality of what divides and is divided, no longer leading another human being different from himself, but knowing all as one and one as all."[35] He sees another as simultaneously one with himself and distinct from himself, and in this he sees the Persons of the Holy Trinity, at once united and distinct. He can no longer know himself in isolation, but only in communion. And this knowledge is life. Hell means frozen loneliness, which is why it is the extreme lessening of life. Paradise means, on the contrary, the intimate presence of all in all, the intimate presence of all in God, the One who is infinite in life and love.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDITION OF SOULS BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, speaking about the life to come—both the happy one and the unhappy one—do not always specify whether they are speaking of the one that follows immediately after death or of the one after the last judgment. Nevertheless, both Holy Scripture and the Eastern Fathers speak of a happy life and of a tormented life that begin immediately after death, on the basis of a judgment, as well as of the happy life and the unhappy life following the last judgment. For the life that follows each person's death and corresponds to the works done in the body, see the following places, among others, in Holy Scripture: Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:10; Heb 9:27; and for the life following the last judgment, see Matt 24:31–46; 25. In the patristic spiritual writings, there are many further references both to either demons or angels taking hold of each soul immediately after death and to Christ's judgment at the end of the world according to each person's deeds. In general, the patristic writings place the happiness received at the last judgment much higher than the happiness after death.[1]

Regarding the happiness that souls that served God during the earthly life receive immediately after death, we give a few affirmations from St. John Chrysostom. He considers Bishop Philogonius happy to have moved to "the undisturbed life" where the "vessel" is no longer shipwrecked, where there is neither "sorrow nor pain," where there are no "diseases and passions and occasions for sin," where there is no longer "mine and yours, these cold words that introduce into life all the evils and that have started so many wars."[2] He considers Philogonius happy because, leaving this city, "he climbed to another city, that of God, and leaving the Church here he lives in the city of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and leaving our feast days he moved to the festal gathering of the angels [cf. Heb 12:22–24]."[3] For St. Paul also calls the things there a "festal gathering," "not only because of the multitude of powers above, but also because of the abundance of good things and because of the joy and infinite gladness."[4] It is an endless festival where "instead of an abundance of wheat, barley, and fruits, in all places is the fruit of the Spirit: love, goodness, meekness; instead of famous and beautifully clothed men, tens of thousands of angels, thousands of archangels, hosts of prophets, gatherings of the righteous."[5] And in the midst of all is seen the King "whom those present behold unceasingly, inasmuch as they can see; and He adorns all with the radiance of His glory."[6] If any encounter is a festival, as the French writer Saint-Exupéry (*La fête de rencontre*) says, then in heaven we will experience the ultimate festival, because we will experience the all-happy encounter with God and with all our fellow human beings.

One sees even here that there is a difference in degree between the happiness after the individual judgment, when we will not encounter all men who had faith in Christ during their earthly lives, and the one after the universal judgment, when we will encounter all.

Regarding the unhappiness after the individual judgment, certain Orthodox theologians describe it almost exclusively as an anticipation of the sufferings after the last judgment, which will be much greater. Metropolitan Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus says, "Thus even the extreme sinners, although they suffer in part, have not fallen into torments."[7] In another place he also says, "The souls of those who died having committed mortal sins are imprisoned in hell, but they are not yet tormented in the general fire; having the fire in front of their eyes, they suffer terribly by seeing it, awaiting the certain fall into that fire."[8]

According to the Orthodox teaching, one element that makes the happiness of the righteous after the individual judgment less than their happiness after the universal judgment is that at the universal judgment they will receive happiness together with all who believe. Abraham himself, who has in his bosom all those who enter into happiness after death, will receive full happiness only at the last judgment (Heb 11:40). Here is implied a solidarity among those who believe in

Christ, that is, in His power to unite us all through His love. No one can be completely happy with the good things received from God if he does not rejoice in them together with others, together with all. God's good things actualize their entire content only if they are enjoyed together with others. Here again the importance of communion among all becomes apparent, because communion among all is the fulfillment and the complete fruition of communion with God, through its acceptance on the part of everyone. This element has thus been developed in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, in that many souls in their provisional state could be taken out of hell through the prayers of the living, and in that through their prayers the saints can help both the living and those who died in sin, something that no longer occurs after the universal judgment.

In Catholicism, however, another conception of the state of souls after death was developed, a conception that appears fully formed during the scholastic period. This conception says that the souls of the saints find perfect happiness immediately after death; the souls of those who depart with deadly sins are in a complete torment; and the souls of those who repented of their deadly sins, but who during this life were not able to give satisfaction for the temporal punishments with which they remained marked, find themselves in a purgatorial fire that, after cleansing them, takes them to complete happiness before the universal judgment, through their involuntary suffering of these punishments.

The second element that, according to Orthodox teaching, distinguishes the state of souls after the individual judgment from the one after the universal judgment is that both the happiness and the torments after the last judgment will be borne not only by souls, but also by resurrected bodies. This again means a total fulfillment of both happiness and torments. It is worthwhile to mention the importance that is therefore accorded to the body, namely, to the entire person. This fact is not taken into consideration in Catholicism, which diminishes the importance of the person as a concrete whole. Strangely, in the Catholic teaching that does not distinguish the state after the individual judgment from the one after the universal judgment, one feels on one hand a tendency toward individualism and on the other hand a tendency toward abstract, suprapersonal spiritualism, which implies a certain contradiction.

Catholic theology's abstract note in this respect is also shown in the fact that in the West, beginning with Scholasticism, the happiness of the righteous was seen in the contemplation of the divine essence. In this contemplation the person fades away to a certain extent, which means a certain lack of interest in communion. In fact, this lack of interest in communion is no longer derived from individualism, but from the person's coming out of himself and entering into the plane of essence or of abstraction, since essence does not concretely exist except in a hypostasis; and in the case of the spiritual essence, it only exists as a person. As essence cannot be truly contemplated except in a hypostasis, its contemplation is more an abstract thought about it. But this may also occur during life on earth and therefore also after the individual judgment, and so for this there is no need for the universal communion after the universal judgment.[9] On the other hand, the essence cannot be contemplated in a hypostasis either, for to contemplate it also means to comprehend it. But the divine essence cannot be comprehended, being an unfathomable reality. The Latins' presentation of this teaching at the Synod of Ferrara-Florence forced the Orthodox Church's delegates to specify that, according to the teaching of Holy Fathers, no creature is able to see the divine essence, but only the glory of God. Mark of Ephesus said, "For that which is known according to essence, because it is known, is comprehended by the knower, since it is already known. But no one can comprehend God by nature because He is incomprehensible."[10] One can have communion with God as a Person, but He cannot be comprehended through an exhaustive knowledge.

Through this teaching the Roman Catholic Church first of all manifests its trust that God's essence can be fully known, and it therefore demonstrates a cataphaticism close to natural rationalism, a cataphaticism that almost treats God as an object subjected to natural reason. Second, through this idea it sets forth a static understanding of the knowledge of God. And third, the understanding of the knowledge of God, being a matter of correct rationalism and not of communion, is no longer connected to the actualization of communion among all believers after the last judgment. Therefore the soul can obtain the full happiness of perfected knowledge immediately after death, through the isolation of its reason, or through the spirit's passage from personhood to an impersonal plane.

The purpose of this conception was to support the Catholic teaching that the fate of souls is definitively and completely determined at the individual judgment: the saints receive full happiness, unrepentant sinners receive full punishment, and those with sins of which they repented through confession, but whose temporal punishments were not remitted, will go to purgatory. There, after the automatic cleansing through a material or quasi-material fire that they suffer as if they were objects, they will surely overcome their suffering, for during this cleansing they are in a state of grace and are certain that they will attain the contemplation of the divine essence.

If the soul's definitive fate is fixed at the individual judgment, the idea of communion no longer plays any role in the definitive determination of its fate.

Due to the absence of the body, in the Eastern teaching both the happiness and the torments after death cannot be complete before the resurrection. But this reasoning loses its importance for Catholic theology because the souls that suffer in hell bear physical torments as well as spiritual torments, and the souls in purgatory are able to suffer the external torment of the cleansing fire while at the same time they are in a state of grace.[11] This means that a physical or objectified element is seen in the soul.

Thus, alongside individualism and abstractionism, a sort of general materialization of the soul is the third implication linked to the teaching that there is no distinction between the happiness and the torments that souls without bodies receive and those received in the body after resurrection—a teaching strengthened by the fact that happiness is considered as above all a philosophical-rational contemplation of the divine essence as an object.

The Orthodox teaching that after the bodily resurrection the happiness in paradise and the unhappiness in hell will be greater implies that happiness and unhappiness are understood as the communion or noncommunion experienced by the whole person, consisting of both soul and body. This makes the souls in hell suffer as well, because they are linked to their unspiritualized bodies.[12]

In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the relation between man and God ceases to be a relation of communion or noncommunion, that is, a relation proper to persons. God is contemplated by some souls as an essence through an impersonal, "transcendental" reason, in which a spiritualization that culminates in love plays no role. Perhaps it was in connection with this teaching that the rise of the "transcendental," impersonal reason of Western philosophy occurred. The happiness of this contemplation is of an impersonal order; meanwhile the eternal, material punishments that other souls suffer (or their cleansing through a quasi-material fire, proportional in time and intensity to their stains) make them similar to objects. This mentality regards everything in an objectified manner. The cleansing fire of purgatory ceases automatically when the stains are blotted out, but God does not make that fire operate the cleansing faster or slower in accordance with changes in the consciences of the souls subjected to it. This transforms God into a reality that is less personal, close to the pantheist essence that is subjected to certain laws. In general, man's (and God's) character as a subject is not seriously taken into consideration. Sin is considered more as an external stain than as an attitude of the conscience or a relationship between the human subject and the divine subject. It is interesting that this fire, whose action God cannot intervene in, can be made to operate more quickly through papal indulgences. Perhaps here too—to the extent to which not prayer, but a distant decree, eases the fate of these souls, without entering into a personal communion with each of them—there appears the force of a suprapersonal institution that works through the intervention of its representative.

In summary, the human person contemplates God as an object, and God treats, or lets the human person be treated, as an object; thus they make each other objects, which means that they are essentially conceived of as objects.

The result of this conception is that the fate of souls is determined by the individual judgment of God—effected according to a strictly juridical criterion—as a state that afterward no longer allows the possibility that either God or a soul might manifest freedom. Those condemned to hell remain in hell under the same complete punishment; those sent to paradise remain eternally in the same state of perfect happiness, accorded to them through a judgment of a reparative character. Those who die after confessing their grave sins, whose heavy punishments have been forgiven but who did not pay off the temporal punishments required by the grave and light sins, go to purgatory, from where they automatically emerge after paying off those punishments in the purgatorial fire. Whether the departed are bound juridically (and therefore immutably) in hell, subjected to an automatic juridical-objectified purification in purgatory, or philosophically and impersonally lost while contemplating the divine essence in paradise, any relationship between them and the believers on earth and any influence on them by those on earth are excluded. Likewise excluded is any help through the prayers of the saints, as well as any easing of the fate of those in hell or in purgatory through the prayers of the saints and of the believers on earth.

Vis-à-vis this fixity of hell and this automatic unfolding of events in purgatory, the Orthodox teaching on the relationship between God and souls after the individual judgment is characterized by a certain fluidity, in which freedom preserves its role because love also preserves its role. Through their prayers those in paradise can help those on earth and those in hell; many souls in hell can be liberated through the prayers of the saints and of those on earth, and the automatic, purifying mechanism of purgatory does not exist.

In opposition to the juridical-objectified and motionless fixity of the state of souls, the Orthodox teaching offers a personal, spiritual, and dynamic-communal relationship between God and man, and thus between those on earth and all who have departed this life. As a result, the state of souls after the individual judgment is incompletely established in a complete happiness or unhappiness, and therefore there is a distinction between this state and the one after the universal judgment, which will make total happiness or unhappiness final. The communication between the living and the departed, between the believers on earth and the saints, is also reflected in the Liturgy.

But this general presentation of Orthodoxy's distinct understanding of the state of souls after death, and of the possibility of changing this state before the universal judgment, must be concretely shown by the way Orthodoxy understands the state of souls in paradise and in hell, and also by the reasons why it does not recognize purgatory.

A. Departed Believers' Growth in Communion with God

The souls that at the individual judgment are found capable of communion with God are not fixed in a state of immobile and individual contemplation of the divine essence, but in a communion of love with the Holy Trinity and among themselves—but a communion far superior to the one on earth. They behold the face of Christ and are not isolated from one another. Together they praise God's glory, and together they serve before the divine throne; and Christ leads them to the source of life, that is, ever deeper in His love, of which they drink without the fountain ever running dry (Rev 7:9–17; 15:2–3). It is not a static contemplation, but a manifestation of love on the part of the righteous and on the part of the Triune God. This communion, even though it is now permanent, always seeks to be deeper, which is proper to communion. This permanent communion at the same time has in itself as communion a movement toward a deeper level, being a "stable movement," or a "mobile stability," as St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor say. A great leap will be achieved in this movement after the last judgment. The basis of this stable movement is God's ever-greater self-offering through His uncreated energies.

> Eastern theology—straining always to conceive a greater fullness and to pass beyond the conceptual limitations which determine the divine being in terms proper to human reasons—refuses to ascribe to the divine nature the character of an essence locked within itself. God—one essence in three persons—is more than an essence: He overflows His essence, manifests Himself beyond it, and, being incommunicable by nature, communicates Himself. These processions of deity outside the essence are the energies: the mode of existence proper to God in so far as He pours the fullness of His deity upon all those who are capable of receiving it by means of the Holy Spirit. This is why a hymn for Pentecost calls the Holy Spirit *streams of divinity flowing from the Father through the Son.*[13]

God is not passive before a reason that contemplates Him, but He communicates Himself to man through love, making His initiative felt in the unending act of His self-offering. As a Person or as a Trinity of Persons united in a supreme love, God is the depth of life and of love, of which the soul wants to partake more and more. And God communicates Himself more and more, while the soul advances not only in knowledge, but also in its entire being, in an ever-deeper union, in a greater likeness, and in a more advanced deification. God is known in light, not theoretically but with the entire being, as a mystery. He is known in His unfathomable reality as the fullness of meaning and as the source of all meanings, since He is known as the inexhaustible source of life and love. That is why He is not locked up within Himself, but is experienced in His totality. And still He maintains in souls a thirst to experience Him even more, to partake of Him more and more, while He always remains conceptually indefinable, incomprehensible in His essence, and the boundless source of infinite love, power, and life, all of which He communicates.[14] Orthodox theology expressed God's dynamic mode of communicating to creatures, without being exhausted as a Trinity of Persons united in the endless affection of perfect love, through the teaching of the uncreated energies. Through these energies God gives Himself wholly but always in various modes, without being exhausted and always manifesting the same love. By increasingly communicating Himself in these energies, inasmuch as we are capable of knowing them, not only does He never exhaust Himself, but He also raises us to ever-higher knowledge, experiences, and states of happiness. That is why in the life to come the saints will progress infinitely in partaking of these energies, or in communion with God, but they will never come to fully comprehend them or grow tired of the Godhead, nor will they be bored by experiencing the Godhead in a monotonous way. St. Gregory Palamas says, "I ask him [Barlaam]: Will the saints not advance eternally into the vision of God in the age to come? It is obvious to everyone that it will be eternally.[15] For Dionysius,[16] the interpreter of heavenly things, conveyed to us that the angels advance eternally in that vision, becoming capable of a clearer illumination when they receive the previous one."[17]

B. The Communion of the Righteous

But it is impossible for God's love, which the saints enjoy, being the love of the three divine Persons perfectly united, not to produce in them a love among themselves, especially because together they are recapitulated in Christ. This does not mean that there is no difference in the degree of their capacity to partake of Christ. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "Some scholars try to discover how the eternal dwelling-places and things promised differ from each other. Is there a difference in their actual locality? Or does the difference arise from our conception of the spiritual quality and quantity peculiar to each dwelling-place? Some think the first and some the second. He who knows the meaning of 'The Kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:21), and 'In my Father's house are many dwelling-places' (John 14:2), will prefer the second explanation."[18]

In other places St. Maximus describes more directly the many degrees that exist between those in the eternal happiness and the progress of all persons in this happiness: "For to him that has, that is, [who has] the gift of future good things, will be given and will be added the tasting of eternal blessings. For the Lord our God, being rich, will never cease to impart to those who love Him the divine gifts of knowledge, which we cannot name in the present age on account of their height and depth, if it is true what the great apostle says about the final happiness, which is above every name, not only in this age but also in the age to come."[19]

But the love of the righteous among themselves must also be directed toward those on earth, with whom they are to a certain degree recapitulated together in Christ, that is, together awash in His love. And love toward those who need help consists in helping them. As a result the saints help those on earth to overcome their difficulties, and they especially help them in their need for salvation. This is also because they feel in their being Christ's entire concern for helping and saving those on earth. If they "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev 14:4) and if He said, "And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20), then the saints too are spiritually with us, because Christ is never alone.

As the angels in heaven rejoice at every soul that strives for salvation, because the Lord Himself has this joy, and therefore they must be saddened over anyone who does not work toward his salvation, so the righteous, who are "like the angels in heaven," must manifest this same interest.

The saints are close to Christ; they "have courage" with Him.[20] Jesus declared them His "friends" (John 15:14) and assured them, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). "Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). On the basis of these assurances of the Lord, *the Church is convinced that the saints put this courage of theirs into loving service toward those who need help and for their salvation, asking for this help and for their salvation from Christ*, as Abraham did

(Gen 18:23–33). For only in this way is their joy complete. Only when they see us saved together with them at the end of the world will they also receive in full the eternal joy (Heb 11:40). Joy is so much greater when it is shared by many, and thus God is known in a much richer way as He shines in more souls, if "the Kingdom of Heaven is within us" (Luke 17:21).

Trusting in their love for us and in their courage toward Christ, the Church and all of us who are her members *ask the saints to pray for us to Christ*. We do not ask them to give us help and salvation from themselves, for as human beings they have nothing in themselves, but from Christ; they are aware of this more than we are. We only ask them to pray to Christ so that He may give us what we need in this life, as well as eternal salvation.

But if we consider the saints as united with Christ and if we ask that they pray to God for us, we also offer them veneration and praise for the richness of the gifts that they gained in Christ, through their witness (by word and deed) to Christ during this life. By praising and venerating them, we praise Christ Himself, who filled them with so much radiance and who raised their humanity to so much perfection in Him. Their praise and veneration is not separated from the praise offered to Christ, for their radiance is Christ's radiance, even though this radiance sheds much light on the ultimate beauty of their general and personal humanity, and even though they have become subjects of this radiance.

Moreover, the very praise offered to them is primarily praise offered to Christ, for He is the primary cause of their radiance. Christ appears so much more radiant and worthy of praise, as His work is shown as being more fruitful in human nature. In isolation Christ would not manifest His glory either in His love for human beings or in the fruitfulness of His love and His deifying salvific work. A householder's diligence is clearly seen through his flourishing household, through the diligence of his servants; a mother's fruitful love is clearly seen through the existence of her many children, who were raised well. That is why in the Lord's Prayer Christ taught us to ask that His name be hallowed. These words deal with the hallowing of this name through human persons, because if He were satisfied with the holiness He had in Himself, this would not be an object of our prayer. Therefore Christ urged us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

The holiness and glory of God are manifested through human persons. And that is why they must strive to make God's holiness and glory evident through their own lives. God also glorifies and sanctifies those who manifest His glory and holiness. These qualities do not remain outside them. The real efficacy of His glory and holiness is shown in the fact that they raise these persons' very humanity to the state of glory and holiness. Aware that the honor given to them is for God's glory and holiness, which polish their humanity too (or are imprinted upon it and radiate from it), the saints remain in a state of ultimate humility. They do not see this glory and holiness in themselves because they feel, more than anyone else, that it is not from them; but others do see it. And when it is attributed to them, they do not acknowledge this. They make a distinction between themselves and God's glory and holiness, a distinction between themselves as humans and this glory, in such a way that only others see it as belonging to them, but the saints themselves do not see it. Therefore their praise in the Church is possible only because they cannot stop us from this, not being visibly present. They can be praised only in their visible absence. Better said, they are present in the Church on holy days, or as often as they are honored and praised, but they are present in a form in which they cannot visibly prevent us from praising them; however, they can help us through their prayers to God. Even their invisible humility during the act of praising them, shining forth toward us, gives us an even greater strength to praise them.

The fact that they do not like for us to venerate and honor them does not mean that we should not do this. We honor them in order to praise Christ, whose work has proved its efficacy through its fruitfulness in them; we honor them by honoring the criterion according to which we too are supposed to act. By refusing to honor the saints, the Protestant world manifests a total disbelief that the human person is able to make Christ's work fruitful and visible, a disbelief that it is everyone's duty to cooperate with Christ so that His work may bear fruit in them. In this is manifested a skepticism not only concerning the human person, but also concerning Christ's efficacy. Human salvation is not achieved without an active encounter between God and man, through an act of power from God upon man as an object, as a "log," either in this life or in the life to come. It is impossible that the total devaluation of the human person, as God's creature, does not reflect upon God as well.

But the humanity of each person is realized in Christ, in solidarity with all his neighbors. All bear witness to the value of every human person, in the solidarity of all with each one. The saints show that their humanity is fully realized in Christ through the love that they show for their brethren, which is the love of Christ that they have taken upon themselves. They show their brethren this love through their prayers. Through the honor accorded to those who attained the goal of their humanization in Christ, those on earth manifest their will to ascend to the true actualization of their humanity.

More united with Christ than all the saints, and therefore high above all the saints and angels, is the Mother of the Lord. She is the one who bore in her womb the Son of God, who was conceived and born of her as a man; then she carried Him in her arms as a baby and remained united with Him through the supreme human affection that a mother experiences toward her son. Her relationship with Jesus is more intimate than any saint's relationship with Him, for His body was directly formed from her body, and she carried Him in her arms, constantly looked upon His face and eyes, breastfed Him, and loved Him with the ultimate human love that is proper to a mother; she was identified, in a certain sense, with Her son. That is why her "courage" toward Him is greater than that of all the saints, and her love for us reflects Christ's ultimate love for us. Orthodox iconography represents Jesus as receiving her soul into His arms upon her dormition, reversing the act of her carrying Him in her arms as a baby. His love for her is just as affectionate as her love for Him. The fully grown child carries in His arms His mother, whose strength is completely diminished. In her person Jesus felt and feels the full measure of human love for Himself, and in His affection toward her is included an affection toward the human person in general, toward human mothers and their love for their sons.

In the Lord's Mother we have in heaven a motherly heart, the heart that has thawed more than any other toward her Son. It beat and is beating upon the door of His heart for His purpose, which is our salvation, for salvation is not a matter of justice, but of love between God and human persons. This human love has become fervent, has reached its high point, by being concentrated in a motherly heart and manifesting itself through it. The incarnate God takes into account this heart of the Mother who became our Mother, because she is His Mother. She is the most precious gift that humanity has offered to God, but she is a gift through which God rewards us with His innumerable gifts. "What shall we offer You, O Christ? . . . The angels offer You a hymn; the heavens, a star; . . . the earth, its cave; . . . and we offer You a Virgin Mother," the Church sings at the Lord's Nativity.

"The Virgin leads humanity, and everyone follows her."[21] She leads in terms of love and purity, and more than anyone else she has taken God into herself. She was the first to pass "through the death that her Son has rendered powerless,"[22] and for this reason, in the prayer that is addressed to her at the Dormition, all ask for her protection: "'In falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos.' The Dormition closes the doors of death; the seal of the Virgin is placed on nothingness which is sealed above by the God-Man and below by Mary, the first resurrected and deified 'new creature.'"[23]

That is why we ask the Lord's Mother incomparably more often than all the other saints to pray for us and for all our loved ones. Always after two troparia addressed to God, one is addressed to her. If one important day of the ecclesiastical year is dedicated to each saint to honor and praise him, the Lord's Mother is praised every day, even though there are a few equally important feast days that are dedicated to her in particular. And she is asked not only to pray to Christ on our behalf, but she herself is asked for many things. It is to her that we address petitions like these: "Save your servants from all tribulation"; "O Lady, help us, have compassion on us"; "Hasten, O Lady Theotokos, and deliver us from all dangers"; "You alone are a hope to us"; "I run to you for refuge"; "O Most Holy Theotokos, forsake me not all the days of my life, and give me not over to the mediation of mortal man. But do yourself protect and save me." This refrain is ceaselessly repeated: "Most Holy Theotokos, save us (σῶσον ἡμᾶς)." Never is she asked, "Have mercy on us (ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς)." Through this last expression, addressed only to God, the belief that we depend entirely on God's mercy is affirmed. The words "save us" that are addressed to the Lord's Mother do not mean "salvation" in the way that the work achieved by Christ does, but rather "release" or "deliverance" from various hardships, afflictions, dangers, and temptations that nevertheless do have some relation to salvation.

But anything we ask from the Lord's Mother, we ask because she is in the most intimate relationship with her Son. Therefore, in the final analysis, He is the source of all the help she gives us. Only because she is the Mother of God the Savior is she asked directly for certain help, but not because she is a savior or co-savior (co-redemptrix, as Catholicism tends to consider her), for she cannot be placed on the same level with Christ, who is Himself the author of salvation. Often she is said to help us because she intercedes to her Son with unique efficacy:

A protection of Christians unshamable,
Intercessor to our Holy Maker, unwavering,
please reject not the prayerful cries of those who are in sin.
Instead, come to us, for you are good;
your loving help bring unto us, who are crying in faith to you:
Hasten to intercede and speed now to supplicate,
as a protection for all time,
Theotokos, for those who honor you.[24]

Her help is so necessary, because one reason why Christ has mercy on those who run to Him is that they honor His Mother. For those who do not acknowledge her as she who gave birth to God in virginity, through the power of the Holy Spirit, do not acknowledge Him as God. "He who in the world was born of you, O Lady, has become the strength and the salvation of the lost, delivering from the gates of hell those who, with faith, call you blessed."[25]

The fact that she is the Mother of God the Savior is also the reason why *we accord her not only veneration as to the saints, but supraveneration (hyperdulia).* This supraveneration is shown in the incomparably greater multitude of prayers addressed to her, in asking her directly for help, and in asking her to intercede to the Savior on our behalf because He was born of her. She has a unique position in the Church's worship. She is above all deified human creatures—and also above the angels—who are all united in Christ. But she is not identical with God and with Christ, the God-Man. She is only human. But she is the human who was raised, through Christ's grace, above all the saints. She is the human who is more venerated than all, although worship is not offered to her as to God or to Christ, the incarnate God, whom we worship as the one upon whom we depend totally and absolutely in our eternal existence and happiness. All that she has, she has as we do: through God and especially through the incarnate God. Still, she has more than we all have and has ascended, through her purity and love for God, above the entire creation; and although she is found in panhuman solidarity with Christ, she brings forth more love than all conscious creatures.

The glory of the saints is also manifested in the particles that represent them, placed around the Lamb, which is transformed into the body of Christ. In the particles placed on the paten, the solidarity of all right-believing Christians, strengthened by their relationship with Christ, is also shown. But the very glory of Christ is manifested through the saints and righteous who continuously increase in number through His sacrifice.[26] They partake of this sacrifice in the form of the Eucharist, whose power they put into effect through their pure life on earth, and in heaven through their ever-increasing radiance and love for Christ and their brethren on earth. Therefore every Eucharist is offered both for the glory of Christ and for the glory of the saints. But the glory of the Lord's Mother is also manifested through the increasing number of saints and through their advancement into a greater glory, although this glory is in itself also Christ's glory. Through their prayers the saints too help those on earth draw closer to Christ's sacrifice and to its fruitfulness in them. By helping to increase the number of those who are saved, the saints receive an increased amount of glory and joy. Moreover, St. John Chrysostom and Mark of Ephesus consider that not only do the departed righteous pray for those on earth, but while offering the sacrifice those on earth should also pray for all the deceased, both sinners and righteous. For through this they too can receive an increased amount of glory and joy, causing them to advance toward the complete glory at the last judgment, which they will receive together with all who are saved.[27]

When requesting such prayer, St. John Chrysostom says, "If he departed a sinner, it may do away his sins; but if righteous, that it may become an increase of reward and recompense."[28] And Mark of Ephesus says, "For the power of prayer and especially of the mystical sacrifice passes over to those who lived a pious life, as [it also passes] over those who are also in a state of imperfection but receive an increase in good and do not yet enjoy the eternal happiness, as the interpreter of divine things Dionysius says."[29] In another place he also says, "That the power of prayer and especially of this mystical sacrifice passes over to those who already enjoy the divine happiness is evident from what we say in the prayers of the Liturgy composed by the great John Chrysostom:

'Again we offer You this spiritual sacrifice for those who have fallen asleep in the faith: forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, apostles,' etc."[30]

We should also mention that the spiritual presence of the saints (with the Lord's Mother at the forefront) around Christ, who is represented in the Eucharist in His state of continual sacrifice, also means that all experience their union with God as their continual, mystical death with Christ, as their surrender as humans to God. It is a mystical death of the natural powers so that all may endure the passion of their deification through God.[31] It is the continuation of their mystical death and resurrection on earth. In this sense we pray to "more perfectly partake of [Christ] in the never-ending day of [His] Kingdom." Not without sense does the book of Revelation present, in addition to Christ as a slain Lamb, the souls of those who "had been slain [died mystically to the old man] for the word of God" as standing "under the altar" of the Lamb (Rev 6:9).[32] This too is the ever-increasing glory of the saints.

The image of the particles for the departed righteous and for the living, who may follow after them at any time, shows not only the solidarity of those who believe in Christ at a certain time, in their inclination to make Christ's sacrifice fruitful, but of all believers of all times.

C. Prayers for the Dead

From what has been said, it results that besides the canonized saints (or those who have been established as such in the consciousness of the universal Church), who are represented on the paten by the nine ranks, we do not know who among the departed pray for us on earth, or if they need our prayers.[33] Perhaps in the case of many righteous persons, both are taking place: they pray for our forgiveness, and we pray for their glory. On the Eucharistic paten we place together the particles of all the deceased, both the unknown righteous and the sinners.

In this way the consciousness of the Church considers that there is a continuous gradation from the highest levels of the righteous to the lowest, and from there to the sinners. In fact, this gradation is so continuous that some who were declared righteous to a lesser degree at the individual judgment and thus who are found in paradise are not radically different from those who bear the stains of sin to a lesser degree and were left in hell, although the Church maintains the separation between paradise and hell. This makes it possible for those in hell who are not radically different from those on the lowest levels of paradise to pass over to paradise before the last judgment, through the prayers of the saints and of those on earth.

There is, however, a lowest region of hell, where the worst sinners are, as there are the heights of paradise, where the saints are. Those in paradise, even those on the lower levels, will remain in paradise after the last judgment, but until then they can advance toward ever-increasing levels through the prayers of those on earth and through their prayers for the latter, as well as through their prayers that they may enter into communion with Christ in an increasingly active way. Those on the highest levels will also advance in glory through their prayers for those on earth and through their increasingly deeper entrance into communion with Christ, as well as through the entrance of many others into the happy communion with Christ and with them.

Up until the last judgment, those in hell who do not totally lack faith in Christ can also be moved to the paradise of communion with Christ, or their torments can be eased through the prayers of those on earth and through the prayers of the saints requested by those on earth, or perhaps through prayers offered though their own initiative. Through the prayers of those on earth, accompanied by the placement of the particles around the Lamb (which has become the body of Christ) on behalf of the deceased, those who are in the unhappy non-communion with Christ may be helped by the communion that Christ offers them through His sacrifice; they may also be helped by the communion offered by those who pray that they accept this communion or warm up to it, if they did not leave this life totally hostile or dead to it.

This is in accord with the opinion that those who went to hell not completely lacking faith in Christ, or not hostile to Him, can be helped to reenter into communion with Christ and with other human persons. These are persons who through their kindness and their reduced faith did not commit acts that damaged the life and salvation of others—acts such as homicide; abortions; unbecoming sexuality outside marriage; depriving others of necessary things, examples, encouragement, and teaching; and violent force by which they took away others' chance for salvation—or those who repented of these things before death but not in a degree corresponding to their evil deeds and not correcting as much as possible, for the benefit of others, the grave consequences of these deeds. These persons can reenter into communion upon manifesting, at the end of their life, the desire to reestablish this communion, which means that they have already begun to reestablish it. That is why the Church gives great importance to confession before death, because it in fact means the real beginning of reestablishing communion with Christ and with one's fellow human beings, through the person of the priest. Thus the dangerous influence they had on others through their example and their push for estrangement from Christ is partially annulled, as is the influence they had through the way in which they tore apart their humanity and that of others.

St. Macarius describes briefly how those who did not completely atrophy their power of communion, which is proven at least by their repentance at the end of their life, may regain the strength for this power. While touching the skull of a pagan priest with his stick, St. Macarius is told that the hardest torment in hell is that no one is able to see the face of the other, "but the face of one is fixed to the back of another,"[34] that is, to the common aloneness. However, the skull added, "When you pray for us, each of us can see the other's face a little."[35] The act of communion by those on earth plants in those in hell the seed of the tree of communion. Then the skull continues, "We have received a little mercy since we did not know God, but those who know God and denied Him are down below us."[36] Noncommunion due to ignorance is less hardened than willfully accepted noncommunion.

When a person prays for another person, he finds himself in the act of exercising his responsibility for that person, and as a result there flows from this responsibility a stream of love that reaches this person and opens him up to communion. If the prayer is intense and persistent, it is impossible that it will not soften the hardness of that person.

Relationships through prayer are the most loving relationships; paradoxically, they are the easiest to achieve, because the Holy Spirit brings His help to the act of offering the prayer. Through prayer you want your fellow human being to live eternally in happiness, you wish the absolute for him, and you want to be with him in an eternal communion. Through prayer you do not allow yourself the possibility of ever interrupting your communion with him or of preventing him from being happy tomorrow.

When two persons pray for each other, they are both in the act of exercising their responsibility for each other. When only one of the persons prays for the other, the latter is not exercising this responsibility and is not aware of the other person's act of exercising his responsibility. But in the end, the latter benefits from the prayer of the first. In any case, there is no prayer without responsibility. In responsibility one person experiences the relationship with the other person, which does not depend on the will of either person, but on the dialogical structure imprinted on each person. In the Church this also depends on the Spirit of Christ, who strengthens this dialogical relationship among persons.[37]

The dialogical relationship between persons, or their responsibility for each other, is expressed not only in prayer, but also in one's action on behalf of the other. In their natural state human persons feel that through their actions of mutual help they fulfill the obligations of the mutual responsibility that is above their wills. But the members of the Church know that this responsibility is placed on them by God, and they fulfill it not only through deeds, which could be considered as their own, but also through prayer, by which they ask God's help for others. They also know that if they do not exercise this responsibility, they fall into an existence empty of content and power, which is a nightmarish and tormenting existence. Into this kind of tormenting, darkened existence falls not only the person who is not helped by the other, but also he who does not help others. For he who does not remain in a dialogical relationship with the other, by responding to his call, falls into the emptiness of solitude, that is, the emptiness of a phantasmagoric and tormented existence.

It is said of St. Pachomius that he once dreamed that the members of one of the monasteries he led were in a cave, linked with each other by holding hands in a row, with the abbot in front, and they were advancing toward an opening through which they could see the light outside. Other people were running to and fro through the darkness of the cave, listening to one voice or another saying, "Behold, here is the light!" And others in smaller rows were continually circling certain pillars, without advancing toward the light outside.

This image of the monks corresponds to the relationship of sobornicity between the Church's members in general. They sustain each other, with the Church's priests and hierarchs in front, all advancing together toward the light of the eternal Kingdom and having even here on earth a certain pledge of that Kingdom.

He who sustains others sustains himself through those he sustains; he who gives strength receives strength. St. John of Damascus says, "Just as he who wants to anoint a sick person with myrrh or with oil first partakes of the ointment himself and then anoints the sick, so too he who works toward the salvation of his neighbor benefits himself first and then his neighbor."[38] He who comforts another comforts himself, he who strengthens another strengthens himself, and he who wants to help another finds in himself new sources of strength.

It can be said that the act through which someone helps and sustains others is the opportunity or the means by which God sustains and helps him; it is the effort that, by mobilizing someone's energies, opens him up to the divine energy, which is communicated for the benefit of both the one making this effort and the recipient of the effort. He who wants to make the effort for his own exclusive benefit is the victim of a spiritual short circuit; he who does not want to enlighten others does not enlighten himself. Unwilling to be a medium for the generous propagation of God's love, and not being warmed himself by the generous stream of divine love, not only does such a person not transmit this love further, but he does not give it a chance to produce its full effect in him either. His disposition to receive and generously transmit divine help is shown in his prayer and action for others. That is why St. John of Damascus says, "For the Lord who loves mankind wants to be asked and to impart the things asked for toward the salvation of His creatures, and it is especially then when He is wholly inclined to do so; not when someone fights only for his soul, but when he does this for his neighbor."[39] He also says, "He who shares and gives, rejoices and is glad more than the one who receives and procures the greatest gift of salvation."[40]

The responsibility for one's neighbor, nourished by the responsibility toward God, is the engine that gives power to prayer and action for others. For it keeps man's being dialogically connected to God and at the same time to his neighbors. God binds us to Himself so that through Himself He may bind us to others. He is the central power station to which all the wires that carry the current (that is, life) lead and from which all start. The appeal "Pray for me, brother (or father)!" that one believer makes to another is the manifestation of his awareness that he depends simultaneously on God and on his neighbor, or on God through his neighbor. But it is also an appeal to his responsibility before God, to a responsibility that includes his responsibility for his neighbors and, specifically, for the one making the appeal. Through this appeal he awakens the other's double responsibility: toward God and toward him who makes the appeal; he awakens him to the consciousness of a dialogical relationship in which he is with God and with the neighbor who makes the appeal. In this sense, the one making the appeal to another gives him the opportunity to awaken the responsibility that binds him to God and to his neighbor. The dialogue consists of one's appeal and the somewhat necessary response of the other.

But any believer appeals not only to the prayer of the other, but he himself prays for him. He commits himself to praying when he appeals to the prayer of the other; or the one to whom the appeal for prayer is made himself makes an appeal to the former to pray for him to God.

Thus both feel responsible, one for the other, before God. Both are bound to God and to each other through the response that each one must give to God for the other. The relationship between believers is a relationship in God and vice versa: the relationship of a believer with God is a relationship with others. He who does not feel connected to the other loses the relationship with God. He who prays to God for the other not only has the other in his thoughts, but is also in a dialogical relationship with him, and that is why he responds to him by fulfilling his appeal to pray to God for him. His real relationship with God, in which the fellow human being for whom he prays is included, explains the divine power that flows both in the one who prays and in the one for whom the former prays, fulfilling what is asked for in prayer.

The believers continue to also feel responsible for their brethren who have departed this life. They experience their dialogical relationship with them too. They cannot erase them from their memory or from their prayer list, but only move them from the ranks of the living to the ranks of the departed. In this responsibility toward them is reflected the will of God, who wants to keep them connected; and through this relationship He wants to pour His love upon those who departed in the faith, through the love of the living for them.

God wants to save all men (1 Tim 2:4–6). "Just as He suffered for man, so too has He prepared everything for him. For who, when preparing a banquet and inviting his friends, does not want all to come and to receive their fill of his good things? Why then did he prepare the banquet if not to receive his friends?"[41] To this end God wants to associate all of them in His generous disposition toward all, so that all may simultaneously delight in the divine generosity and in the generosity of as many persons as possible, or in His generosity through the generosity of as many persons as possible. That is why God does not forget the dead and also causes the living to not forget them.

Of course, in this "all" only those who responded—at least to some small degree—to God's appeal while they were alive can really be included. St. John of Damascus says the following about those who collected a small amount of virtues but could not make use of them with their whole being: "The Lord will awaken after death those close to Him and His friends, whose thoughts He directs and whose souls He moves toward their benefit and their aid. Being moved from above and through the Lord's touch within their hearts, they will complete what is lacking in the deceased."[42] But to him who departed this life with an utterly material mind, no one will extend a helping hand, "because neither does God have him in His memory."[43]

This issue should be understood as follows: those who died in the faith have agreed to enter into the living and life-giving dialogue with God before death, even if they did not fully engage in it or respond with their whole being to God's appeal. As such, they died in a somewhat actualized dialogical relationship with God. And God does not break off the relationship with them after they can no longer do anything to advance in this relationship. They remain in "God's memory." But he who remains in God's memory remains in His concern, which means a relationship with God. That person does not completely die spiritually. For God's concern for him means that God's thought is directed toward him, and likewise, God's word and life-giving current are directed toward him. God's word keeps alive the person to whom it is addressed, through the echo of God's appeal in his conscience and through the need to respond that such a person experiences in his being. God never addresses Himself to a person in isolation, because He does not see him in isolation. God sees every human person in his essential and dialogical relationships with his fellow human beings; He directs His concern toward him so that His word may be spread through him to others in order to awaken them as well to a response, whether they need to be helped through the person through whom God is speaking, or whether this person needs the help of others. Thus, if in his prayer for others the believer actualizes a dialogue directed toward both God and man, this is because God Himself raises him up to this dialogue, reminding him of another and asking him to pray for that person, or because God shows His concern for that other person as well. Moreover, God has already begun to help the other person spiritually, including him in His dialogue with the person being asked to pray, or including the one who is asked to pray in His concern for the person who needs the prayer.

If we pray God to "remember" the deceased, this does not mean that we take the initiative in remembering them, but that God considers necessary both our response and the deceased's response, which is invigorated by our response, in His concern for them, so that His concern may become most effective and may truly give them life. Only in this way does God's remembrance, which we ask for the deceased, keep them alive forever, because only in this way is the true dialogue between Him and them maintained: they respond together with us, or as a result of our response, to God's concern for them.

In any case, God's remembrance has the power to keep spiritually alive unto the ages of ages those who respond to this remembrance. We do not have this power because as the moment of their separation from us becomes more distant, so does their remembrance weaken in us, as does our power to keep them in a relationship with us and therefore alive. In addition to this, after two or three generations no one remembers most of the deceased. Only for and through God do they always remain present and therefore alive, because for God there is no past. Then the Church remembers them in general during the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, and God keeps the deceased forever in His memory once the relatives who knew them have prayed for them and once the Church has prayed for them in general. The saints, who keep their memory alive forever, are also in the Church.

He who remembers someone helps him to remain alive. So much more does a person's remembrance by God help him. For a person struck by total or partial amnesia, all or certain persons have sunk into nothingness. This means that the person struck by amnesia can no longer help other persons to exist in any way. Thus the forgotten persons lose a support; they lose a sense of their existence, of this existence's significance. And if all human persons were to be struck by amnesia in relation to a person, that person would lose all meaning, all significance, and all interest in continuing to exist. He would sink spiritually into a sort of tormenting desert; and once he was physically dead, his soul would enter definitively into this tormenting and meaningless desert. So much more does God's forgetfulness have this effect for a person who does not respond to God's concern for him. To this voluntary divine amnesia is added the partially voluntary amnesia of the human persons who never received a positive response from that particular person. That person, falling from the dialogue with God and with his neighbors, had fallen from reality into a phantasmagoric and senseless emptiness, which constitutes an unspeakable torment.

When we ask God for "memory eternal" on behalf of someone, we ask that he be remembered by God in the present too, as he will be remembered in eternity, and thus that God keep him alive forever. If we were to ask God to remember him only from the last judgment onward, this would mean that God would forget him for a while and then remember him again. We do not ask God to remember him only sometimes, but to always keep him in His memory, unto the ages of ages (αἰωνία ἥ μνήμη). Through our prayers we keep eternally alive those who were. No one is definitively lost.

But our dialogue with God on behalf of our deceased neighbor is sustained not only by remembering him in prayers, but also by remembering him through our deeds, especially through works of mercy, through which we include other human persons in this dialogue, causing them to also remember him. Such a remembrance of the deceased on the part of us who perform works of mercy on his behalf, and on the part of those who benefit from these works of mercy, is a dialogue not only between us and him, but also a response given to the appeal of the deceased, and to God on his behalf. This extension of the dialogue is additionally realized through prayers. The relatives who remember the deceased ask this from the priests and from others as well, so that as many as possible can be drawn into this dialogue with the deceased and with God on his behalf.

Because we are in a relationship with those who have fallen asleep, when we ask others to remember them and when we perform works of mercy on their behalf, they themselves in a way ask for God's remembrance through us and press us to perform these works. It is not only we who perform works that they did not have time for or were not in the position to perform while they were on earth, but they themselves somehow participate through us in the performance of these works, through the pressure that their expectation or appeal, stimulated by the Holy Spirit, exerts upon us. St. John of Damascus says that God "considers them as their works."[44] Since all good works are done as the result of a call by God, to whom we respond through these works, even works on behalf of the deceased are also performed by God, because we perform them by responding to God's appeal to perform them on behalf of the departed, with His help.

This is why St. John Chrysostom speaks of a last testament in which the dying includes not only his relatives, but also the poor and God Himself, so that they may do what he could not do: "In addition to your children and relatives, also write into your last testament the Master as beneficiary. Put the name of the Master in the document, and do not fail to mention the poor."[45]

God expects all human persons to do good, so that all of them may become good, fulfilling their duty toward Him, and so that all may therefore become good through the good done to them. If some fail to fulfill this duty, others must perform on their behalf the good works that they did not, so that no good that God wishes will remain undone in the world and so that humankind in general may progress toward the stage of goodness that He seeks.

It is not only the deceased who benefit from good works, but also those who do them on their behalf, as well as those for whom these good works are done. They are performed "so that the deceased may also benefit from God's goodness and so that brotherly love may grow, hope in the resurrection may increase, and prayer to God may multiply; so that the contributions to His dwellings may grow through a greater warmth and so that doing good for the poor may abound."[46]

That is why God does not forget any good deed done unto others (Heb 6:10), for all of them are inscribed in an ascending line toward a superior stage of the goodness of all who believe. He does not forget because through all things the faithful respond to God for the gifts they received, responding first of all to Him by assuming and increasing the goodness He showed them, through the gifts that He gave them or that were given to them.

God longs to see His gifts transmitted from person to person, says St. John of Damascus, that is, to see His goodness increased among human beings through their effort: "It is for this that He thirsts, it is this that the Lord who is above goodness wills, asks, and wishes, so that no one will remain without His divine gifts."[47] "For this is what brings satisfaction and joy to the merciful God: that everyone rush to help his neighbor. This is what the Merciful One wishes and wills: that we all do good to each other, both in life and after death."[48] These quotations do not speak of an increased amount of good in an abstract way, but an increased amount of love among real persons. Those who do good in this life will not see the good they did as an abstract entity, but in the gratitude with which good will be done in their name after their death.

The greatest help, however, will come to the deceased from their remembrance in connection with Christ's sacrifice at the Divine Liturgy. "The interpreters and eyewitnesses of the Word, the disciples and apostles of the Lord who have conquered the earth, have established that those who have fallen asleep be remembered in connection with the dreadful, immaculate, and life-giving mysteries."[49]

St. Cyril of Alexandria emphasized at length the fact that we cannot enter into the Father's presence except in a state of pure sacrifice; and we cannot actualize this state of pure sacrifice within ourselves except by having Christ—the only pure sacrifice—within us, or by the sacrificed Christ assuming us within Himself. In addition to this, at the Divine Liturgy the entire community, or the entire Church, offers itself in Christ as a pure sacrifice to the Father; the entire community surrenders to the Father by responding perfectly to His appeal for love and completing the dialogue with the Father as He wished. For the community assumes the response of Christ, that is, His surrender; or Christ unites its response, its surrender, with His response or His surrender. But the community united with Christ also has the departed connected to it in the dialogue of remembrance. It prays to Christ through words, in its dialogue with Him, to receive them as well, through remembrance; it prays that He receive them in connection with Himself and that He offer them to the Father, or that He unite them with the Father by His surrender to the Father together with them.

If our entire response to the Father's appeal (or our entire surrender to the Father), through prayer and acts of going beyond ourselves, receives power only from the power of Christ's sacrifice or complete surrender, it is evident that our deceased are drawn into this act of surrender to the Father because of Christ. For if He offered Himself as a sacrifice for all, so that all may be offered as a sacrifice in Him, the power of His sacrifice does not stop at those who are still alive on earth, but is extended to all who died in faith, in dialogue with Him and with their neighbors. This sacrificial power is extended both through itself and through the other faithful. Christ's sacrifice is continually offered for all, and it keeps all connected to Him in the dialogue in which they are offered to the Father together with Him; thus Christ is the source of the Church's sobornicity.

D. The Icons and Relics of the Saints

We honor the saints and the Lord's Mother through icons that represent them. As we honor them, because Christ shines in them, so do we honor the icons, because they represent the saints in their quality as dwellings of Christ.

But if we honor the icons of saints because they are dwellings of Christ, so much more are we justified in painting and honoring the icon of Christ Himself.

What does this justification consist of?

In the Old Testament there were no icons of God, but only symbols: the paschal lamb, Aaron's staff, the holy tabernacle, the ark of the law, and so forth.

But although it acknowledges the symbol, the Old Testament forbids the idols (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:6–10). What is the difference between the symbol that the Old Testament acknowledges and the idol that it forbids?

Because it was a created thing, the symbol visibly represented a certain attribute of God; in this sense the entire creation is a symbol of God. But in the Old Testament certain created things, indicated by God Himself, received through prayer a special power from Him, and thus a role as a more accentuated symbol. However, God remained distinct and above both the general symbol, represented by any created thing, and the special symbol, indicated by Him and consecrated through prayer.

In contrast to symbol, the idol was a piece of nature viewed in itself as God, in a pantheist sense. This is the reason why the Old Testament forbade the idol and recommended the symbol. Through the idol human beings would not make a distinction between God and the world; through the symbol they remained in a relationship with the God who was distinct from the world, a relationship that made the world dependent upon Him.

But the icon is neither the idol, which identifies God with a created and manufactured image, nor the symbol, which bears in itself a power of God; rather, the icon is the representation of the God who became man and whose nature still did not cease to be distinct from the created nature.

That is why the icon was only possible after God Himself became man and made the face of His uncreated hypostasis out of the human face.

Through the fact that the Son of God Himself took on a human face, God became visible as a Person, making His divinity visible through His humanity, although distinct from it.

This gave the saints, who have Christ fully in themselves, the potential to reflect Him, and therefore the icons of the saints represent them as bearers of Christ. Thus all icons are essentially reduced to the fact that the Son of God became man and manifested Himself through the human face.

Only the Word's Incarnation made God's mystery and infinite light transparent through the human face. Only His Incarnation caused the unspeakable but real infinity of the Word's divine Person to be manifest through the undefined human face. The prohibition of idols in Exodus and Deuteronomy served the purpose of preventing us from identifying created things in themselves with God, or even the human face in itself with God's face. It drew attention to the divine apophaticism, to the absence of God, in any other purely human face before God the Word became man. It protected us from prematurely identifying the human nature in Christ with the divine nature and showed us that Christ's human face is the face of God the Word through the initiative of God the Father, not through a natural birth.[50]

Through the Incarnation God Himself made His face out of the human face and gave the fruit of the tree of life—that is, from Himself (Rev 22:2)—to all faces that enter inwardly into communion with His face.

We paint Christ's icon not only to remember the human face of God, who was once on earth, but to make His face visible by artistic means. His face exists even now and will exist forever in a relationship with us, and depicting it assures us that our faces too will rise to an eternal life in communion with Him. We want to have the icon of His face eternally because His face endures eternally and is in relationship with us. We want, through His icon, to raise our minds and hearts to His invisible but living face; we wish that, when we see His face in the life to come, we will be familiar with it or able to easily recognize it.

The fact that the Son of God was able to make the human face His own, to give it the inner dimension of infinity, to manifest the divine transcendence through it, and to make it eternal shows that the human face in general has in itself the capacity to become the visible image of God. It shows that the Son of God is the model for the human image and that God also has an image, a form of manifestation according to which the human face is created, a visible expression of the human spirit. Thus, by maintaining this expression eternally, through it He remains in a relationship with all who believe in Him, as any living face is directed toward others.

Certainly, the emergence of the human face itself cannot be reduced to the operation of the cosmos; it is something unique, unrepeatable, "an opening toward transcendence,"[51] a continual transcendence seeking the true transcendence. Nevertheless, the human face by itself, although it transcends this cosmic process, is enclosed by death, that is, through this process.

But through Christ's undefined human face, God's infinite depth is visible; Christ's face is filled with the divine transcendence. Not being enclosed by death, it remains eternally directed toward us. Through the relative transcendence of Christ's face, God's absolute transcendence is visible, which causes it to conquer death and to remain eternally open. "To meet Christ means to meet a face that will never be confined within itself."[52] Through communion with His face, our face will receive the power to rise again for eternity. Christ has thus restored in Himself the eternity of the human face. But this shows that through the Incarnation He restored the human face in its full likeness to the model, a restoration that was not possible except through the model's union with it, since the model made the human image His own. And through Him this model is continually imprinted on those who believe in Him, that is, on those who remain in communion with Him, and it fills their image with the life with which His face was filled.

The hypostasis of the heavenly Son, because He is in the image of the Father as the filial expression of divine nature, also becomes the hypostasis of the human image, or of the human face, which is created with Him as its model. He has in Himself both the human image and His divine model, which are not separated. The model penetrates, raises, enlightens, and transfigures His human image (which is most clearly expressed in the face), and His human image enters into eternal relationship with all faces. In assuming the human face, the Son's hypostasis gives it personal hypostatic characteristics, distinguishing it from the face of any other man but preserving the general features of human nature.

St. Theodore the Studite responds to the iconoclasts, who affirmed that the human nature of Christ was uncircumscribed and thus without an individualized figure, by using biblical quotations to show that Christ was a specific "Who," an "I," a proper name distinct from other "I"s and other proper names. St. Theodore adds that He did not have this character as a human hypostasis apart from the divine one, but the divine hypostasis itself gave His human nature the characteristics of His hypostasis, and consequently He Himself as a man became circumscribed, the bearer of individual characteristics, even though as God He is not circumscribed but still has distinct personal characteristics in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. St. Theodore says that we are not Nestorians; we do not confess that the human nature in Christ is circumscribed due to a human hypostasis that is distinct from the divine one:

> But since, according to the Church's judgment, we confess that the hypostasis of the Word became a common hypostasis of the two natures, hypostasizing the human nature in it, with the properties which differentiate it from the others of the same species, we may with reason say that the same hypostasis of the Word is uncircumscribable according to the nature of His divinity but circumscribed according to His essence like ours. Thus human nature does not have its existence in a self-subsisting and self-circumscribed person, apart from the hypostasis of the Word, but has its existence in that hypostasis (lest there should be a nature without hypostasis), and in it is contemplated in an individual manner and is circumscribed.[53]

The humanness of Christ is circumscribed in one way as a body and in another way as a soul. As a soul it is circumscribed only in the sense that it has certain specific personal characteristics, distinct from person to person. But the human face unites the circumscription in both senses. As such, it is a paradox: through a very limited material surface an indefinitely rich spiritual life is visible, one that is complex and always in motion, although it is personally distinct from that of other persons.

But through the same human face of Jesus, although "circumscribed," there shines forth not only the human spiritual life, but also the uncircumscribed Godhead, which surpasses beyond all measure the indefiniteness of the human face, or the human spiritual life manifested through the face. Better said, the same hypostasis manifests the uncircumscribed infinity of His Godhead through the "circumscribed" spiritual characteristics of His human face.

But the Person of the Word, distinct from that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, is He who shines forth through the assumed humanity. Even through this He gives personal characteristics to the human nature He assumed, and does not accept it in its generality, in which He cannot exist anyway. Because humans are created according to the image of the Son of God, they all in general have His image as a son. And likewise, He as a man has this image. It is according to this particularity, as a unitary and unique hypostasis, that Christ is rendered in any icon. Through the material face that a painter paints, the representation of a simple man suggests his indefinitely complex spiritual life, since it depicts the person who also sustains that life. In the same way, so does the icon of the Savior suggest not only His spiritual, human, and indefinite life, but also His perfectly uncircumscribed Godhead, since the icon depicts His unique Person.

The iconographer produces this suggestion not through his talent, but through the fact that he represents Jesus with the unique symbols of His actions: born in the manger, with the star above and the angels around, with His Mother and Joseph watching over Him; crucified between two thieves; breaking down the gates of hell and rising from the dead; performing certain miracles known from the Gospels, and so forth. In these actions the iconographer renders the Person of the Son of God, who was incarnate and saved us through His Crucifixion and Resurrection. But he also renders an everlasting love and power that no man has ever had or will have: that is, the uncircumscription of His love and power in specific acts that visibly characterize Him alone, and therefore circumscribe Him. St. Theodore the Studite says,

> When anyone is portrayed, it is not the nature but the hypostasis which is portrayed. For how could a nature be portrayed

> unless it were contemplated in a hypostasis? For example, Peter is not portrayed insofar as he is animate, rational, mortal, and capable of thought and understanding: for this does not define Peter only, but also Paul and John, and all those of the same species. But insofar as he adds along with the common definition certain properties, such as a long or short nose, curly hair, a good complexion, bright eyes, or whatever else characterizes his particular appearance, he is distinguished from the other individuals of the same species. Moreover, although he consists of body and soul, he does not show the property of soul in the appearance of his form: how could he, since the soul is invisible? The same applies to the case of Christ. It is not because He is man simply (along with being God) that He is able to be portrayed; but because He is differentiated from all others of the same species by His hypostatic properties. He is crucified and has a certain appearance. Therefore Christ is circumscribed in respect to His hypostasis, though uncircumscribable in His divinity; but the natures of which He is composed are not circumscribed.[54]

Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clément insisted on the fact that God, and therefore God the Word as well, is not without any form. In opposition to the impoverished content of spiritualism, it is necessary to affirm that in God the absence of the image would be a lack of plentitude.[55] "God is the Form of all forms, the Icon of all icons; he is the all-containing archetype. The apophatic approach is not a pure denial or negation. It rather affirms that God is a Meta-Icon, in the words of Pseudo-Dionysius, a Hyper-Icon."[56] Dionysius the Areopagite says that God is above all affirmations and all negations.[57] "Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being."[58]

"The icon therefore does not lead us to the absence of images pure and simple. It leads rather above and beyond the image toward the indescribable *Hyper-icon*; this is its apophatic character, that is, *iconographic apophaticism*."[59]

Divine existence is not only the source of all words, but also the source of all images. As such, not only is the supreme Word beyond all words, but the supreme Image is beyond all images. Only he who subsists is able to speak. In the Old Testament God often speaks from a cloud or from fire (Exod 16:10; 24:16; Deut 4:12), or He shows Himself speaking (Isa 6:8; Ezek 1:24–25). Even when, in the prophet's spiritual hearing, the word resounds without God's subsistence—His Image—being seen, its presence is felt, as the word's voluntary starting point. God is felt spiritually as having spoken because man feels the impulse to respond every time with a precise word or action.

His subsistence itself, felt as the starting point of the spiritually heard word, is an invisible Image, a real depth of all subsistences, that takes these forms and receives an order out of the depth that is filled with the potentiality of all forms, out of the virtual bosom of all images.

In the Old Testament, with all its warnings against depicting God in images, the prophets sometimes see God in one form or another. Moses "saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness" (Exod 24:10), which means that a form of God gave form to the place where He stood. Moses also saw that "the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain" (Exod 24:17); therefore he saw a form emanating from God.

But more defined is the form in which God shows Himself to the later prophets. Isaiah sees Him sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by glory and the seraphim (Isa 6:1–3). Ezekiel sees God in "likeness as it were of a human form" (Ezek 1:26); and Daniel in the same way (Dan 7:9, 13; 10:5–6). These were foretastes of the Son of God as seen in the book of Revelation, a depiction that in that case was based on His manifestation in history as a man.

The most adequate, expressive, and communicative image of the supreme Image is the human being or the human face. This has been seen prophetically since the time of Old Testament. For through the human face, the supreme spirituality (or the form of the supreme spirituality) can be communicated. Only through the personal face of the human being—which expresses consciousness of oneself and all others, openness to and love for all, and the capacity to express one's will and affirm oneself—can the divine personal spirituality be expressed in the most adequate manner. Only the human person is able to know God, especially in His inner being, and only he can consciously delight in communion with Him and in salvation. This is why God the Word assumes the human face, as His most adequate image, so that He may enter into communion with human persons, communicate Himself to them, and communicate to them God's inner life within a human framework.

The Son of God's spirituality, or the form of this spirituality and communicability, found the most adequate expression in the human face, eternalized and raised to the maximum degree of transparence, to the maximum expression of consciousness of self and all others, to the maximum expression of love and of God's inner life in the face of Christ. And at the same time, this expression was raised to the highest degree of likeness with its Model. The Son of God took on the human face because the human face is a face of communion; because through it is expressed the spirituality experienced within, so that it may be communicated to others. Thus through it He was able to enter and remain eternally in the highest degree of communion with all human beings and was able to reestablish in the highest degree the communion among them.

The faithful want to have not only Christ's word with them until the end of the ages, a word of inexhaustible love, but also Christ's human face and, through it, the loving face of His divine spirituality, the face that pours forth the maximum and endless communion between God and those who believe. Out of this face of endless love, there also originates His word of inexhaustible love, a word whose meaning never ends. They do not wish to know only in a theoretical way that the word preached to them is the word of Christ; they wish to really connect it to the face of Christ, as its starting point. In fact, this face itself is an inexhaustible plenitude of words, because it is the face of endless love that wants to communicate itself. That is why Jesus' face, as it is represented in icons, speaks of Him, expresses Him, and is His unending word. It has been said, in fact, *that the icons are the Bible of those who do not know how to read*, or of those who do not have time to read.

Moreover, because in the Orthodox icon Christ's face is rendered with strict observance of the iconographic canon of the oldest tradition, it can be said that the icon protected the Orthodox—as the assiduous reading of Scripture did not protect other Christians—from a variety of arbitrary understandings of Christ. Through the Orthodox icon, which remained uninterruptedly and strictly in line with the traditional canon from the beginning of Christianity, Orthodox Christians held fast not only to the uniform understanding of Christ, but also to the understanding of Him that was passed down from the time close to the apostles and from places close to the region where the Lord lived and worked. And the Christ rendered in such an icon is a profoundly spiritual Christ. Thus, alongside the patristic and ascetic spiritual literature, the Orthodox icon has been the most important guide for the more diligent faithful in their formation in line with a spiritual life in which they experience Christ in the Holy Spirit. The saints were the ones who formed themselves in this sense; in their icons is rendered the same mode of spiritual living, through which they strived to follow Christ. In these icons there is also affirmed a sense of salvation that is distinct from that of external justification through Christ's sacrifice of satisfaction or expiation. Through the icons we see the deification to which those who believe in Christ are raised, the deification that opens the horizon of the age to come.

Up to the present day the Byzantine style of iconography has affirmed the spirituality that can properly be called "Christian," and now this style has begun to be appreciated once again—not because it is the style of the Byzantine era but because it is the style of the transfiguration and authentic spiritual sensitization of the human person in God, outside of which there can be no other authentic Christian spirituality. In the case of Jesus, in addition to the personal, unique acts in which Christ is depicted in icons, this is the only "objective" mode by which the Godhead's noncircumscription in Christ is still suggested, with the exception of cases in which an iconographer who is more filled with the Holy Spirit succeeds in suggesting something of this noncircumscription through his talent.

But the faithful know that the icon speaks to them and guides them in line with Christ's exemplary life, not only as a teaching about the authentic Christ. They are convinced that through icons they enter into real contact with Christ; thus they connect the words spoken to them about Christ in the Church with Christ Himself, who is always alive and present in the Church, in any place where they turn their sight to the icon of Christ and venerate it with faith in Him.

Therefore the key issue posed for the theological explanation of the role that icons play in Orthodoxy is the following: What real and present relationship is there between the living Person of Christ and His icon, and how is this relationship established?

The Seventh Ecumenical Council's definition affirms that the veneration given to the icon "passes on," or "rises," to the person represented, to the prototype. Usually this expression is interpreted as a voluntary movement of the mind from icon to prototype, as from one thing to a completely separate reality. But this "passing on" has a much deeper meaning. It is impossible for him who believes in Christ not to make the passage from His icon, or from that of the saints, to His or their living reality. In this necessity of the mind to pass from the icon to its living prototype, there is also implied an action of Christ upon him who looks with faith at His icon or that of the saints. As the word about Christ provokes in the one who hears it the necessity to think of Christ, so does this word given material form (that is, His icon) provoke in the one who looks at the icon the necessity to think of Christ, just as in general any word that someone speaks about something provokes in the one who hears it the necessity to respond, to take a stance toward what is said to him and toward him who says it. Here there is hidden an ontological relationship between the image and the reality it depicts, as between a word and what is said through the word or him who utters the word, or between the latter and the one who hears the words. This is primarily because there is an ontological relationship between reality and its image or word, or the word about it, for there is no reality that does not have its image and the word about it, or its word, implied in itself, if it is a conscious reality. Therefore it is impossible for the respective conscious reality not to concern itself with the effect that its image and word produce in the one whom it touches, because it addresses him.

St. Theodore the Studite says,

> If every body is inseparably followed by its own shadow, and no one in his right mind could say that a body is shadowless, but rather we can see in the body the shadow which follows, and in the shadow the body which proceeds; thus no one could say that Christ is imageless, if indeed He has a body with its characteristic form, but rather we can see in Christ His image existing by implication and in the image Christ plainly visible as its prototype. From the simultaneous existence of both, it follows that when Christ is seen, then His image is also potentially seen, and consequently is transferred by imprint into any material whatever. Even if the natural is not simultaneous with the

> arbitrary, as Christ with His image, nevertheless by its potential existence even before its artistic production we can always see the image in Christ; just as, for example, we can see the shadow always potentially accompanying the body, even if it is not given form by the radiation of light. In this manner it is not unreasonable to reckon Christ and His image among things which are simultaneous.[60]

If the bright shadow is linked to the body itself through certain material rays originating from the body, then someone's image is linked to his reality through the spiritual rays by which he necessarily projects his image, at least in the souls of others.

Due to this fact, reality necessarily attracts the mind toward it, and through the mind reality attracts the very being of the one who contemplates its image or hears its word or description. St. Theodore the Studite also says this, insisting on the simultaneity between viewing the image and thinking of the prototype. "The prototype and the image belong to the category of related things, like the double and the half. For the prototype always implies the image of which it is the prototype, and the double always implies the half in relation to which it is called double. For there would not be a prototype if there were no image; there would not even be any double, if some half were not understood. But since these things exist simultaneously, they are understood and subsist together. Therefore, since no time intervenes between them, the one does not have a different veneration from the other, but both have one and the same."[61]

This means that when the icon is viewed, the believing soul speaks with Christ and it is Him whom he worships, even though He is not the same as His icon, just as a mother who looks at her son's photograph speaks with him but does not confuse him with the photograph. The icon and the prototype are simultaneously comprehended by the mind, without being confused; better said, the icon is forgotten, and the direct relationship with the prototype is experienced. St. Theodore the Studite even declares that "the prototype and the icon have their existence in each other, and by suppressing one the other is also suppressed." This does not mean a magical or worshipful identification of the icon with the prototype. St. Theodore the Studite insists on specifying this. He responds to the accusation that he deifies the icon, that he includes Christ and His icon in a single veneration: "There is no such thing in my letter, but [only] that the icon of Christ should not be worshipped. This is idolatrous thinking, for worship is due to the Holy Trinity alone. And Christ, who is venerated in the holy icon, is worshipped together with the Father and the Spirit, and the icon is venerated with relative veneration."[62]

The defenders of icons did not yet have in a clearly defined way the doctrine of the uncreated energies, brought into creation by the Holy Spirit. This would have made it possible for them to explain the relationship between Christ as a prototype and His icon, a relationship that they affirmed without confusing the two.

This relationship is more clearly explained in the prayer for the consecration of an icon of Christ, a prayer found in the Orthodox Church's Euchologion. This prayer mentions the touching by Christ's face of the cloth that Abgar of Edessa sent Him; on this cloth He left imprinted, together with His image, His power, by which the one to whom it was sent was healed. For, in conformity with what has been said previously, someone's image or word and his subject are linked by a power that shines forth from him. Then the prayer says, "O Gracious and Almighty Master . . . look down with mercy upon us and upon this Icon . . . send down upon it Your heavenly blessing and the grace of the Most-holy Spirit, and bless and sanctify it; and grant it the power that heals and dispels all diabolical snares; and fill it with the blessing and strength which that other holy Icon Not-Made-By-Hands richly acquired from the touching of the most-pure Face of Your Beloved Son, whereby, through its powers and miracles, it may act for the confirmation of the Orthodox Faith and the salvation of Your faithful people."[63]

In this way we ask that the present icon may share in the power not made by hands that was given to the icon through the touching of Christ's face, and that the power of that icon may also be extended to this icon. The prayer concludes with the affirmation that before the icon one offers veneration to the Triune God: "And whereby all that are bowing down in worship before them to You and Your Only-begotten Son, and the Most-holy Spirit, earnestly praying and calling upon *Him* in faith, might be heard [and might find the mercy of Your love for mankind and receive Your grace]."[64] When called upon in prayer, the Holy Trinity, descending in the face of the icon, raises into its presence the one who upon viewing the icon is motivated to call upon God.

Similarly, the saints are linked to their icons by the special fact that they are filled with Christ, and the energies of the Holy Spirit that fill them are projected through them and upon their icons as well. Through icons we ascend to the veneration of the saints, in whom we see the result of Christ's work, as well as His present work.

The Church also honors the relics of saints, thus honoring the saints themselves, because human persons also enter into relationship with them through these relics. The fact that their relics are maintained in an incorruptible state is a pledge of the future incorruptibility of whole bodies after the resurrection and after their complete deification. They are maintained incorruptible because in them a divine power has been maintained since the time when their bodies were united with their souls. Moreover, the accentuated deification of their souls is extended to them from their current state. This is due to the fact that the powers of the soul and the divine grace in it also extend their work into the body, achieving in that body a state of holiness for as long as the soul lives on earth, and a kind of incorruptible state after the saint's soul passes through death to the accentuated state of deification. Thus the relics are a foretaste of the pneumatized body after the resurrection.

Remaining incorruptible, the saints' relics show that their personal souls and the grace of the Holy Spirit within them continue to remain connected with their bodies.

Therefore those who pray near the relics of a saint do not address the relics, properly speaking, but rather the person they represent. The veneration passes to the person, as in the case of the icon.

The Church and the faithful have the conviction that by touching a saint's relics, and through prayers addressed to the saint while beside his relics, healings and other miraculous acts often occur—just as they do through the touching of icons—due to the divine energies that are extended from the persons represented in the icons, and ultimately from Christ into icons or relics. In the resurrection of a dead man who was cast over the bones of the Prophet Elisha (2 Kgs 13:21), Holy Scripture gives us the basis for honoring relics and for the faith in the power radiating out from them. The divine power that works through the saints' bodies after death is a continuation and also an intensification of the power that worked through their bodies while they were alive.

Even the shadow of Peter's body had the power to heal the sick over whom it fell (Acts 5:15). And other sick persons were healed when they were touched by handkerchiefs or aprons that the Holy Apostle Paul had used (Acts 19:11–12).

CHAPTER 6

THE END OF THE PRESENT WORLD

God created the world in order to deify it, not to leave it eternally in a relative form. He did not create human beings to perfect them one by one by having them pass through death, and only in their souls, but all together in their entire being and thus also in their body, which is connected to the world. Only in this way will the human person be perfected as the human person. It is in this that the purpose of the Son of God's intimate union with the world, through His Incarnation and bodily Resurrection (because the body is part of the world), will ultimately be fulfilled. Only by bringing it to perfection does God complete the plan of creating the world and of its deification in Christ, after everything that could have been accomplished on earth has been accomplished in its present form, through His help, so that the divine reason may be made transparent in it.

Our life finds meaning only if it passes through death to the plenitude of eternal life. But the human person cannot obtain this plenitude if he cannot also experience it in his resurrected body, liberated from corruptibility. For complete human life is the bodily life, which gives a specific complexity to human existence and makes the human person capable of beautifying his spiritual life in the richness and harmony of the visible forms.

The Son of God, who assumed a human body and rose again for eternity, brought to light the unique and complete value of human life. Thus God justified the creation of matter. By assuming and resurrecting the body, He raises matter to the plane of ultimate participation in His spirituality, without leaving the individual body prey to eternal decomposition.

But the bodily resurrection of the individual human person cannot take place except in solidarity with the transformation of the entire substance of the cosmos, that is, at the end of the present form of the world. Christ alone rose beforehand so that He might place before us the perspective and hope of resurrection and so that He might become the source of the power to transfigure the present cosmos and the source of our bodily resurrection as well. The risen Christ is by Himself the beginning and the prophet of the end of this world's present life and of its elevation into the plenitude of life in God.

The elevation of our individual personal life into the plenitude of God's life goes hand in hand with the elevation of all persons to that life. This is not only on account of the fact that bodily resurrection cannot be obtained apart from the transformation of the world and from the resurrection of all, but also because history, as the work of all humanity, has significance for the positive or negative actualization of all human nature's potentialities; history also has the mission of making the entire world the transparent medium of the divine reasons in it, through everything good that humanity accomplishes within its framework, or else to make it opaque through the evil humanity does.

God raises the world into His eternal Kingdom, to a plenitude of life in which the potentialities He implanted through creation are shown in a fully actualized way. But the human person cannot actualize these potentialities in isolation, but only in cooperation with others and through his activity within a cosmic framework. That is why human activity as a whole has a meaning, a significance for humanity's life in the plane of its eternal plenitude, where it takes along with it everything positive that has been accomplished in history so that it may be made eternal. Faithful humanity is not transported as a passive mass into the plane of perfect and eternal life, but God has given humanity the potential, through its common efforts, to make the most of His natural gifts and of the help He gives during the earthly life. Christ Himself was incarnate as a man in history and remains with us until the end of time, in order to lead us on this path of being raised to Him so that we may grow spiritually and imprint this growth on the world in an active dialogue with Him.

Thus these are the components of universal eschatology: the perfection of the world, after it has experienced the end of its present form; the Second Coming of Christ; the general resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the bodies of those on earth; the universal judgment at the end; and the eternal life in happiness or unhappiness.

Among these, at least the first three will occur simultaneously. But the cause of all these will be the Second Coming of Christ, or Christ will come again in glory to produce all the others. Since the first component will be the end of the world (although its hidden cause is Christ, who will come a second time), it is better that we treat the end of the world first.

A. The Movement of Creation toward the End

Christianity affirms that the present form of the world will come to an end.

In the Orthodox teaching, in contrast to Catholic teaching, the universal judgment maintains its proper importance; it brings to fulfillment, in a significantly greater degree, the happiness or unhappiness of the souls that passed through the individual judgment. This is why the end of the present form of the world, to which the last judgment is linked, is not awaited only by the living, as normal death is awaited, but both the living and the dead await it with utmost interest. The souls of the dead also await it in order to receive complete eternal happiness or complete eternal unhappiness.

Surely we cannot imagine that God arbitrarily retains a portion of the happiness or unhappiness that is owed to those who die before the end of the world. Therefore we must admit that everyone's complete happiness or unhappiness depends organically on the end of the world and on all humanity's activity in the world, and thus on the result of this activity: that which is good will be made eternal in the heavenly Kingdom, and that which is evil will be made eternal in hell. And this is true not only in the sense that the integrity of everyone's happiness is conditioned by the happiness of all who will share in it and that the unhappiness of a sinner is completed by the unhappiness of all sinners—if that were the case, as more people die the happiness or unhappiness of those who died before would increase, and on the other hand an individual judgment of those who are alive at the end of the world would suffice to complete their happiness or unhappiness—but also in the sense that everyone's plenitude of happiness or unhappiness depends on a new and final judgment passed on all in common. This means that all are judged or evaluated according to their contribution toward fulfilling God's plan for the world and for human life, a plan that consists in making God transparent through the world and through human life.

Thus the dead will be judged again in the light of their contribution toward realizing this plan, which will be seen in its final outcome only at the end, after all persons have brought their contribution, good or bad, in this regard. The deeds and thoughts of all will come to light before all, so that everyone may be judged for his contribution or for the part that those deeds and thoughts played in the totality of human life, which will have arrived at its end. Those of old will see the results of their thoughts and deeds in the succeeding generations; those at the end will see the legacy of their predecessors, which they made fruitful or left fruitless. Those of old will be judged according to what happened after them, and those at the end will be judged according to the fulfillment, or lack thereof, of things before them. We will be judged for all the good appeals made to the entire world by the apostles, martyrs, and saints, and for all the good examples of our predecessors that were not followed. Because we falsely developed our humanity, we will see their intensity of feeling, upon which we deposited our lack of feeling. Those of old will be judged for all the bad seeds planted in the world and will receive the reward for all the good seeds planted in it, seeds that will prove either fruitful or fruitless at the end. All history will again be present before all persons—not only events that happened in the visible plane, but those that happened in the invisible plane, even those that could have happened or could have not happened; all this will weigh down upon everyone or bring them joy according to what they have done, good or bad. Then all will see that the past has not died. The Christian teaching on the bodily resurrection and the universal judgment is significant, among other reasons, because it gives an ultimate appraisal, valid for eternity, of everything that existed, because nothing is left to be lost to forgetfulness. The universal judgment is thus a factor that encourages us to do good in the world, as the thought of death encourages us in our individual lives.

All will be gathered again in an eternal joy for everything good they have done, and this good will be ceaselessly increased by the gift of God. Only an unending history would condemn to an eternal death that which is most important in history and in the past.[1] On the contrary, only in history's ending within the perfection of everything that existed and within the eternal joy for the good done and then made eternal (or within the eternal torment for the evil done) is creation removed from the relativism that would otherwise remain eternal, is the good established as the immovable criterion of our deeds, and is the eternal value of all persons revealed.

Nothing of the totality of earthly life will remain covered, not taken into consideration, not profited from, unappreciated, or uncondemned, but all will answer positively or negatively for all things; all will share in all things with a new understanding. Properly speaking, only at that judgment will the meaning of human history be revealed; that is, only in the revealed light of Christ's glory—which is not only the glory of the one born of the Father, but also that of the one who became the model man—will there be revealed the goal toward which human life on earth (and all its acts) was supposed to tend, and in what measure this was accomplished. Many historical events and many human actions in history will remain covered with ambiguity until then, and until then many who participated in them or were their authors will not fully realize whether they were wrong or not, and therefore they will not be able to fully rejoice in them or be saddened by them.

This does not mean that divine judgment will be guided only by the human person's outward and distant actions, and not by his inner state. At that time the divine light will show how the entire human person's contribution toward good or evil is closely linked to his inner state, which determined that contribution or was determined by it. When presenting himself, each person will implicitly carry within himself, as the seashell carries in itself the echo of the waves, the echo of all history, his relationship with the entire human life that unfolded in the world. But the sense of the complete human life on earth, its finality, cannot be clearly deciphered only by observing it at the end. The new light at the end will be a light that results not only from observing human life unfold in its entirety, but also from the revelation of a light that will not be seen in itself. For this light itself does not give sense to the unfolding of human history, but God Himself seeks to realize a union between Himself and this light so as to make human beings apt for eternity.

Starting from 1 Corinthians 15:28, "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be everything to every one," Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa conceived of the unfolding of human life in the world as the time that human beings have to submit to Christ by being conformed to and included in Him, which occurs because they in common are filled with His perfection. Only then, when Christ submits Himself to the Father together with all human beings, will there be a state of ultimate happiness for the entire creation. Until then God's immanence is still somewhat external to the world, and thus the world is somewhat imperfect.

But given the human person's freedom, the end of human life on earth will not necessarily entail the incorporation of all human beings in Christ, but only those who want this. With this important correction, we can acknowledge that the life of the world feels the effects of Christ's participation in it. It feels His suffering over the members of His body who are not fully integrated, the attraction that He on His part exerts upon human persons on earth, and, through this, His effort toward total submission to the Father together with all those who have been brought into spiritual unity with Him.

Certainly, Christ is already personally subjected to the Father, but in Him all who decide to maintain and perfect their humanity will also be gathered, and they will bring their nature's divine image into complete likeness with Christ. This is why Origen says,

> One should not believe that the Son of God is not yet subjected to the Father, but it is in the last times, when all things will be subjected to Him, that He will also subject Himself. But because He receives all that belongs to us—and because He says that it is He who hungers and thirsts in us, it is He who is naked and sick, the stranger and in prison, and everything that is done to the least of His brethren will indeed be done to Him, since each of us will be fully and perfectly subjected to God so that he will no longer seem disobedient in anything—this proves that in Him all will be subjected. There is another manner in which one can better understand what I say. If there is pain in one

> of our members although our heart is unharmed and all other members are healthy, on account of the fact that through the pain in one member the entire man suffers, we still do not say that we are healthy, but that we feel sick. For example, we say: He is not healthy. Why? Because his leg hurts, or his kidney, or his stomach. No one says that he is healthy if his stomach hurts, but that he is not healthy because his stomach hurts. If you understand the example, let us go back to what we proposed. The apostle says that we are members of Christ's body [Eph 5:30]. Thus Christ, whose body is the entire human race or even the totality of the whole creation [*totius creaturæ universitas*] and each of us is a part of it—if any of us, who are His members, is sick and suffers from the disease of a certain sin, that is to say, if he is affected by the wound of a sin and is not subjected to God—it is said that He whose members are not subjected to God is not yet subjected to God. But when He will include all those who are His members, [those who are] healthy and not suffering from the disease of disobedience, and when all members will be healthy and subjected to God, one can indeed say that He is subjected to God.[2]

Here[3] Christ's profound and mysterious solidarity with the entire unfolding of human life on earth is affirmed. Christ suffers with all of humanity, and in this His efforts for our perfection are manifested, even if our efforts do not always cooperate with His. He strives for all of us to be included in Him, so that He may subject Himself wholly, that is, with all the members of His body, to God the Father.

Since the moment He was crucified, Christ has not drunk the wine of joy, and He will only drink it again with all of us in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 26:29). He actualizes His sacrifice until the end of the world. In its striving for God, the entire human life on earth is the path of the cross—an ascent toward Golgotha and crucifixion with Christ, through the power continually poured out by His Crucifixion for the sake of the world—but it is also a rejection of this path. Human life on earth is a ceaseless partaking of the cross of Christ, but also the refusal of this cross, a fight against partaking of it. Human life on earth is a mixture of the attachment to evil and the fight against evil; it is to repent of sins and to overcome them, but also to continue to commit them. It is a life with Christ through the power of Christ, but also a life of powerlessness and the rejection of Christ's path.

> Let us now see in what manner our Savior will not drink wine until He drinks the new wine with the saints in the Kingdom of God. My Savior weeps for my sins.[4] My Savior cannot rejoice as long as I remain in lawlessness. Why? Because He Himself is the advocate for my sins before the Father, as John, His disciple, says that "if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins" [1 Jn 2:1–2]. Therefore, how can He who is the advocate for my sins drink the wine of joy when I sadden Him with my sins? How can He, who approaches the altar to offer propitiation for me the sinner, rejoice, He toward whom the sadness for my sins rises continually? . . . He will be sad for as long as we persist in error. If His apostle mourns for many who have sinned before and have not repented for their sins [2 Cor 12:21], what can we say about Him who is called the Son of love? For all these He stands before God interceding for us; He stands at the altar to offer God propitiation on our behalf. Because of the very fact that He was going to approach the altar, He said, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you" [Matt 26:29]. He does not want to drink the wine alone in the Kingdom of God, but He waits for us . . . We are, therefore, the ones who postpone His joy by neglecting our life.[5]

It is not only Christ who does not enter into complete joy for the duration of human life on earth, but also the saints. They too weep for our sins. In this sense they also partake of Christ as He sacrifices Himself. Therefore the happiness of the souls in the provisional state is not complete.

"The apostles themselves have not received their joy yet, but they too are waiting so that I may also become a partaker of their joy. For when the saints depart from here, they do not immediately receive the crowns for their merits, but they wait for us who are procrastinators or commit sins. For their joy is not complete as long as they are grieved and weep for our sins."[6]

After quoting the Holy Apostle Paul (Heb 11:39), Origen concludes, "See that Abraham still waits to receive perfection. So do Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets wait for us, to receive perfect happiness together with us."[7] In this sense history will be judged as a whole, because those who make up the one body of Christ through faith appear during the entire time it is being perfected. "That is why that mystery is reserved for the last day of that extended judgment. For one is the body that awaits justification, one [is the body that] is said to be raised at the last judgment. 'But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"' [1 Cor 12:20–21]. With respect to vision, if the eye lacks the other members, what joy will the eye have? Or what perfection will it have if the hand or the legs or the other members are missing?"[8]

In this sense Origen also interprets the vision of Ezekiel (37:11) about the gathering of bones, nerves, veins, skin, and so forth, in order to constitute new bodies. "Therefore you will rejoice when you depart this life, if you are a saint. But the complete joy will be when you do not lack any member of your body. You will also wait for others, as others waited for you."[9]

But like Christ, the saints too do not only passively await the end of the world, but through the power of their suffering and love they contribute to the support and development of the true Christian in the world. A Catholic theologian says,

> Just as the risen Christ directs human affairs from the mysterious heaven where he hid himself from human sight on the day of the Ascension, so do the multitude of martyrs and saints who surround him on Mount Zion intercede with him and like him . . . The saints participate actively in God's judgment. This became apparent at the breaking of the fifth seal (6,9-11), in the first act of the vision of the seven trumpets (8,3-5), and several other subsequent texts come back to it again (for example: 18,20, where God even seems to be pronouncing judgment on the saints) . . . These one hundred forty-four thousand . . . represent, in our understanding, the immense multitude of those [in heaven] . . . As they follow the Lamb everywhere He goes, they also assist Him in His duties as Judge and, in union with Him, preside over the unfolding of human history . . . Describing the entire story of the end times as a judgment in unceasing progress, [St. John] shows the part that the martyrs and the saints, in union with the risen Christ, already have invisibly and will have more and more in this unfolding of the divine judgment throughout the centuries.[10]

Not only the saints in heaven await the end of the world, but the believers on earth also aspire toward the end, as the point at which they will be fully united with the Lord, will be perfected in Him, and will find rest in Him. "There is no Christian messianism . . . but there is a Christian eschatology."[11] Namely, Christians do not await the Messiah as a totally new and unexpected truth, like the Jewish people; they expect and hope that Christ, and the glory of His truth and love in the world, will be completely manifested through the world's perfection on a plane different from that of its present image. "This waiting for Christ, this hope for his glorious parousia, are and must be more powerful than any messianism could be, for they are completely penetrated by love, the love of the Church for Christ. In fact, in this love and in this hope is expressed the tendency of the Church and of all creation toward the definitive and perfect unity of all things, [a unity] that will not be fully realized except on the day of the glorious parousia of his Son."[12]

The Orthodox teaching on the universal judgment places a distinct emphasis on the value of history as a whole for any human person: the deep communion among human beings, the necessity of their cooperation in order to lead history to the state that God wills. For this same reason the saints also remain profoundly interested in the course of human life after them, and through their prayers they seek to positively influence human beings. It is especially important that everyone receive the fullness of his happiness or unhappiness only at the judgment at the end of the world; this shows that in the Orthodox conception history is destined to an end and to a judgment, and consequently it is a common work of all humankind, in which every individual has importance.

B. History and Universal Eschatology

The Orthodox teaching on the end of the world is confirmed in the tendency toward an end and toward a perfection, a tendency that is manifested in the historical life of the world. Through its nature and also through Christ, the world tends toward the end.

1. One interpretation of creation's unfolding and unitary ending sees these events' essential reality in the communion of the personal subject with other subjects.

Thus on one hand creation's historical unfolding through the character of human beings as subjects, as its factors, is required by an order of subjects fully liberated from the order of objectivity and by the struggle for that order; but on the other hand this unfolding cannot be achieved within creation's current framework. This means that on one hand creation in its present form must die, not in order to remain definitively in death, but to rise definitively into another existence, so that there it might achieve its aspiration toward perfection. "The history of the world . . . will come to an end . . . It is only the resurrection of all that lived which can impart meaning to the historical process of the world."[13]

The preceding idea comes from Berdyaev, who, having been influenced by existentialist philosophy, makes too great a division between the order of human subjects' relations and the order of things. He does not see the possibility that human subjects might fully communicate among themselves through the reality of the objects within their framework; he does not see the possibility that this framework might be transfigured through the spirit and that God might contribute by becoming transparent through this framework. We call to mind that when objects are made into transparent mediums for communion, they are then considered as gifts and words of God's love for us, and are also used as such among us. Moreover, he considers that human subjects are actualized especially in acts of artistic, literary, and philosophical creation. We must acknowledge that every believer is able to transfigure the objective order through all his acts that spring out of faith and love; through all he is able to die to a life subjected to objects. As the Holy Apostle Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20), and "For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:11). Therefore this death and resurrection cannot be realized only through the power of the human spirit itself—as the thinker mentioned above leads us to believe by the fact that he values artistic, literary, and philosophical creations almost exclusively—but through the power of the Spirit of Christ. This is manifested in any work of love for God and for one's own neighbors. "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor 4:10). Without assuming the Lord's death, without dying for the sake of God to everything that is evil and egoistic in us, we cannot gain the new life in Christ; and so much less can we prepare ourselves for resurrection with Christ.

It is interesting, in fact, that while negating the value of the objective order in history, the aforementioned thinker puts such a great price on artistic and philosophical accomplishments, which also have an objective place in history. In reality, they represent, at least in part, the common work toward transfiguring the objective creation, toward making it transparent for God and for our fellow human beings. That is why it will be judged as a whole, to the extent in which it contributed to the transfiguration of the world. And every person will be judged according to the extent to which he contributed to this transfiguration, which consists in making transparent the structures of divine love and spiritual beauty in interhuman relationships within the cosmic framework. The beautiful realities revealed in this sense by human persons and by the peoples of the world will be made eternal in their perfection in the life to come: the frescoes from Voroneţ Monastery, the cathedrals of the West, Beethoven's symphonies, the relationships of profound humanity and justice established among human persons as expressions of the divine-human spirituality that was given material form in history. "By [the Lamb's] light shall the nations walk . . . they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations" (Rev 21:24, 26). In this way the expectation of the universal judgment is an important factor for stimulating creativity in the world, for everyone's participation to the common work given by God, so that God may be made transparent in the relationships among neighbors and within the framework of creation.

Like the end of the human person, the end of history as a whole will be experienced as death, not simply as an uninterrupted passage from one phase of life, experienced as inferior, to a superior sphere.

Certainly, as has been said, sometimes the believer experiences the vision of the divine light even in this life. The appearances in which Jesus allowed His disciples to see Him in His glory after death were without a doubt moments of the end of history that occurred within the framework of history, an eschatological vision that surpassed "the vision and knowledge of faith."[14] However, our being does not rise to this vision through its natural powers, but through the divine powers, which certainly do not eliminate the natural powers, but strengthen them.

The Holy Fathers unanimously declare that just as the eye cannot see the physical light outside itself and the things in that light unless it has that light within itself, so our spirit is not able to see the divine light and its inner realities unless it has this light within itself.

2. Pavel Florensky says that just as the life to come is a life revealed in the Holy Spirit, so its foretastes during earthly existence are instances of being lifted up in the Spirit, but these instances cannot have either duration or fullness during life on earth. It cannot be otherwise.

> Knowledge of the Holy Spirit would give perfect spirituality, perfect deification to all Creation, perfect illumination. Then history would end; the fullness of time would be achieved; in the whole world Time would be no longer . . . But as long as history continues, only moments and instants of illumination by the Spirit are possible. The Comforter is known only at certain moments and instants by certain individuals, who then rise above time into Eternity: "There is no time for them," and history ends for them. The fulness of the acquisition of the Spirit is inaccessible to the faithful as a whole. It is also inaccessible to an individual believer, within the limits of his life. Christ's victory over Death and Corruption is not yet assimilated by Creation, not wholly assimilated. Thus, knowledge is not perfect. Just as the holy, incorruptible relics of ascetics are pledges of the victory over Death, i.e., manifestations of the Spirit in fleshly nature, so holy spiritual illuminations are pledges of the victory over rationality, i.e., manifestations of the Spirit in psychic nature. But to the extent there is no resurrection, to that extent there is no perfect illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit. To assert that perfect knowledge or perfect purification of the flesh has been achieved is imposture, the imposture of Simon Magus, Manes, Montanus, the Khlysts, and thousands of other false bearers of the spirit, who have lied and are lying about the Spirit . . . All the holy fathers and mystical philosophers speak of the importance of the idea of the Spirit in the Christian worldview but hardly any of them gives a clear and precise explanation of anything. It is clear that the holy fathers know something. But it is even clearer that this knowledge is so deeply buried, so unutterable, that they do not have the power to clothe it in precise words.[15]

3. Another Orthodox theologian, Nicholas Afanasiev, has the same dualist vision of history as Berdyaev. For him two eons coexist permanently within history. According to him, history does not advance toward an end. But he boldly identifies one of history's components with life in Christ. Properly speaking, this component is not part of history, but is beyond it, even though it is concomitant with it. He affirms the existence of two "eons"—one "new," and the other "old" or that of the "world"—that do not influence each other.[16]

4. Today some representatives of Protestant theology (for example, Jürgen Moltmann) have also discovered a positive, dynamic aspect in the movement of history.

Although the fundamental Protestant teaching is that in this life we have nothing of Christ's life of grace, but only a promise (*promissio*), from this theology the Protestant theologian Moltmann no longer draws the conclusion that we must resign ourselves to the conditions of a life subjected to evil, but the conclusion that we must struggle against the structures of evil in this world.

The conception of history as a reality that advances toward the Kingdom of God through increasingly just social orders is also maintained by certain Catholic theologians, although in terms that are not as clear as those of some Protestant theologians, like Moltmann. It seems that these theologians have abandoned the irreducible dualist vision of history that was inherited from the Blessed Augustine.

Thus Johann Baptist Metz declares, "Salvation, the object of Christian faith in hope, is not a private salvation."[17] He emphasizes that the salvation heralded by Christ has reference to the world—if not in the natural-cosmological sense, then certainly in the social-political sense, as the critical liberating element of this social world and of its historical process. "The eschatological promises of the biblical tradition—freedom, peace, justice, reconciliation—cannot be reduced to a private matter. They constantly force themselves into the sense of social responsibility."[18] Surely, these promises cannot simply be identified with any one social status. Any political status that has been achieved appears provisional before the eschatological perfection that Christians await. "For this 'eschatological proviso' does not make us deny the social reality but creates a critical and dialectical attitude toward it."[19] Justice, peace, and brotherhood must be helped to increase in the concrete conditions of historical life.[20] Christians are obligated to participate especially in the action of establishing peace and, certainly, in creating the conditions for it.

This new Protestant and Catholic understanding of history is no longer completely foreign to the Orthodox one. It comprises the following elements that are worth mentioning:

a. Christ leads history as a whole toward the Kingdom of God through social progress and the reform of its institutions. That is why Christians are obligated to contribute to this progress and these reforms, which play a part in drawing history closer to the Kingdom of God.

b. However, history will not attain eschatological perfection by itself. For in the duration of earthly life, death persists, with much worry and sadness; therefore perfect communion with all cannot be reached within its framework. That is why creation calls for an end.

c. Thus Christians are obligated to participate in all actions for the improvement of human relationships, not only within a particular framework but also on the general social plane.[21] They should develop a sense of historical responsibility, in addition to the sense of responsibility for their individual neighbor, for through this they help all humanity advance toward eschatological perfection. Because this perfection can only be obtained at the end of history, in God, and history's advancement toward that perfection is sustained by God Himself, Christians must actualize their relationship with God within the framework of all relationships and social structures, surpassing their purely human aspect. They must infuse into these relationships and structures their feeling of responsibility before God for their fellow human beings, so that these relationships may not be left with a character of external, formal, or simply sentimental equality. For this would not fill their life with plenitude, nor would it prevent them from death.

Only a Christ present in Christians, and only to the degree in which He is present in them, helps them to continually overcome the formal, external aspect of progress in human relationships, a progress that is structured by increasingly advanced reforms. Only Christ helps them toward a satisfactory warmth and spiritual depth, after He helps them to contribute to building certain structures of greater justice and fellowship among human persons.

According to us Christians, this progress in overcoming external equality and respect can be achieved to the degree in which we have

Christ and His power within us as the source and subject of endless love. Therefore only the saints give complete warmth to their relationships with other persons, since they have Christ in them in a supreme way.

All the teachings communicated through revelation and all the gifts given by Christ have spiritual depths and endless levels. Christ as a man, or as the perfect union of humanity with God the Word, has an endless depth of meanings and of powers that lead toward love. These deify us and help us; they call us and continually lead us further and higher in our understanding and way of life, so that we may discover ever-higher horizons that we must make known to the world as modes of superior relationship.

The sacraments of the Church do not only give us certain static graces—certain good things or limited virtues that we should carefully keep within their present limits—so that we might present them well preserved to God at the final judgment, as the hidden or not multiplied talent from the Gospel. The sacraments have a prophetic and dynamic character as well; they give us powers that are to be continually developed and more fully actualized, powers that should take us to increasingly advanced spiritual levels in our interhuman relationships, toward their ultimate perfection. But we do not profit from these depths only by ourselves, but also together with Christ, by making use of the new aspects of social reality that history uncovers not only through a slow evolution but also sometimes through leaps that occur in history. Christ is not content with passively showing us His state as Prophet, as a state toward which we all should tend. He is the permanent Prophet who leads us continually closer to Himself, always higher and closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ is the target for creation and its leader toward this target. As such, He gives meaning to its unfolding. Christians see this leadership of Christ and contribute to its advancement, but they also continually surpass any point already attained as they live in an increasingly deeper way.

The saints do not think that they have reached the end of history, but they too await its end, so that they may experience the panhuman communion in its plenitude, through the visible revelation of Christ's glory and through the complete activation of His entire power of love for human beings.

Thus it seems that the Kingdom of Heaven will come after creation has achieved, on behalf of the entire world, structures corresponding to that Kingdom of justice, peace, and equality; it will not come until creation has achieved, at least for some, the most advanced experience of these realities in God. Eschatological perfection will come about after humanity has struggled to do everything possible to draw near to it. When that perfection comes, humanity will realize that this was exactly what was needed, that is, the proper preparation to receive that perfection with understanding.

Christ helps to lead creation toward Himself, and He fulfills it in Himself at its end, not only as a factor working within creation (a factor somehow unknown in its totality but more consciously known within Christians) but also as its ultimate Judge. The very consciousness of a final judgment, at which we will present ourselves, gives Christians the power to be active in history, so that it is led toward the Kingdom of God. At the end each person will be judged before all others, face to face with history's final outcome. Thus it will be apparent that each person is called to do good not only within the closed circle of his friends (in the egoism of the married couple that avoided having children, in the egoism of the tribe or blood relatives, in nationalistic egoism), but also on behalf of human causes in general. Therefore even those who died before the final judgment will be judged again then, because at that time it will be seen to what degree their deeds have caused those who lived after them to do good or evil for humanity and for its development.

This is another reason why the saints and the angels eagerly follow the way in which the human persons of subsequent generations come to the end of their lives, while praying for them, helping them, and keeping their crowns ready.

But out of a responsibility toward our predecessors, we on earth also have the duty of contributing to the positive development of history, knowing that at the end they will be judged again for the final outcome of history as a whole.

In contrast to Christian teaching in general and to its aforementioned interpretations, which see a theoretical incompatibility between eschatology and history, there are certain conceptions that view eschatology as an event produced within history, namely, in its final phase. In a somewhat impossible way, they reconcile history's relativity with the absolute that appeared in it. They see Christ's Second Coming as an event that will occur at the end of the world, but not beyond it (*die entgeschichtliche Parusie*).[22] The representatives of these conceptions affirm that as the world was the place where Christ might fight for His Kingdom, so must it also be the place where He may triumph; that as He manifested Himself in humility in the world, so must He also manifest Himself as triumphant; and that history will only receive its complete meaning and abandon its enigmatic character if it is enlightened at the end by the Lord's coming in glory. They assert that if God's work in the world is a continual affirmation of the world, He must appear at the end of the world. In this way He brings the final "yes" on its behalf and shows that God can appear in the world in all His radiance, that the world can make His manifestation possible, because His *kenosis* does not pertain to the structure of time, but to God's will to abstain from fully manifesting Himself so that man may have the potential to fully open himself in freedom to Him.[23]

It is true that the meaning of creation's history will be revealed only through the complete revelation of Jesus at His Second Coming, when He will pronounce judgment on this history and this judgment will fully show history's importance. But what is the basis for the inference that this revelation of history's full meaning, and therefore this clarification of God's position regarding everything accomplished in it, must also be a historical event, when any event in this history must borrow its relative character?[24]

The meaning of history cannot be revealed in history; the judgment upon it cannot be pronounced within its time, for this would mean that it had reached its end while it still unfolds, which is impossible. Therefore the revealed manifestation of Jesus Christ with His perfectly deified humanity cannot take place in history. For this deified humanity itself is beyond history. History is, by its very essence, a path, not a final resting place; it is an ongoing tension. It is time, and in time not everything is given in a concentrated manner. Even if we do not think that evil must necessarily be done in history while it lasts, all the good is not yet possessed. History is the domain of the movement toward perfection, not of perfection itself, where movement has stopped. It is the domain of the relative, of incomplete discovery; it leaves room for suppositions, possibilities, and ambiguities. Starting from this tension, one cannot reach rest by evolving, but through a leap that is beyond the powers of any tension, movement, or history. It is necessary that history be stopped from above, so that humankind may be taken to a suprahistorical existence.

The theories that view the Parousia as an event in the final part of history, that view the eschatological event as the perfection and final phase of history, conceive of the Kingdom of Heaven as a developed image of this world, or this world as an undeveloped image of the Kingdom of Heaven. They do not see the transcendent character of the Kingdom of Heaven or the irreducible dualism between this world and the Kingdom of Heaven.

This error is most accentuated by those who are properly called "chiliasts," who await Christ's Kingdom of one thousand years on earth before the last judgment. Only the righteous, they say, will share in the joy of this Kingdom—both the deceased who will rise at its beginning and the living who will join them. The sinners who have not died will spend that time shut in prison—even though, according to another opinion, the righteous will be in heaven with Christ for the entire time, while Satan, with his angels and the sinners who still live, will be on a deserted earth.[25] At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released, and the sinners will be resurrected. Satan, with his angels and the sinners, will rise against Christ and against the righteous, but the former group will be completely destroyed. According to another opinion, the dead sinners will rise again for the universal judgment only after the last uprising of Satan and of sinners on earth has been defeated.[26]

In all the variants of millenarianism, the Kingdom of Heaven has a historical character, as this life does. The sinners will wage a physical or a spiritual war here on earth against the citizens of this Kingdom, and therefore they could clash at a certain moment, because the sinners and the righteous will coexist at least then. The sects that sustain this theory are not content with only the happiness of the spiritual life, but at least for the period of a thousand years they want a kind of happiness closer to the one possible in the world.

This teaching amounts to a continuation of the hopes of the Jewish people, who waited for the Messiah to reestablish his kingdom on earth, which had been destroyed by the Babylonian kingdom. It wrongly interprets the Old Testament prophecies that speak of a future restoration of Israel's glory by the Messiah. It is said that after the return from Babylon that kingdom was never truly reestablished, as Isaiah (49:23; 61:5–6), Daniel (2 and 7), and Ezekiel (40–48) foretold. Therefore it must be fulfilled sometime. This teaching was taken up not only by certain sects, but also by a series of Protestant theologians, such as Cocceius, Bengel, Öttinger, Merken, J. T. Beck, Auberlen, R. Rothe, Martensen, Hoffmann, Delitzsch, Frank, and so forth.

In general, chiliasm means the expectation of a future "provisory perfection of the Kingdom of God on earth through a direct intervention of the ascended Christ."[27] But its many variants could be reduced to two general forms: moderate chiliasm and strict chiliasm. The former awaits Christ's coming at the end of a period of perfected history, and the latter, at the beginning. Moderate chiliasm is represented by Spener, who hoped in "in future better times"; by Bengel, who expected a time of victory and flourishing for the Church; and by Delitzsch and Martensen, who speak of a "spiritual" coming of Christ.[28]

According to moderate chiliasm, the Jewish people will convert, there will come a time of great missionary activity, Christianity will have the power to dominate the world, and Christian ideas will permeate life and human institutions. All this will be the effect of the ascended Christ and His dominion, which He will invisibly exert from heaven through His "spiritual" Parousia. But His personal, visible coming will not yet have been produced, and thus the resurrection and transfiguration of the Christian community will not have been either.[29]

According to the strict chiliasm of Hoffmann, Frank, and Auberlen, the millennium will begin with the coming of Christ, with the resurrection and transformation of the believers, and with the restoration of the transfigured community on earth. The returned Christ will exert His royal dominion on earth.[30] This dominion of Christ on earth will coincide with the kingdom promised to Israel. "Chiliasm and the expectation of Israel belong together."[31] Israel will return from the diaspora to Canaan, and its kingdom will be reestablished through the returned Christ. Israel will exert dominion "under the promised messianic king."[32] Jerusalem will be the center of the thousand-year kingdom. Israel will again walk before the face of all humanity. As the priest relates to believers, so will Israel relate to the world: it will mediate the world's relations with God. "Thus the

Judeans are our teachers in things divine. For so they are also in the New Testament."[33]

The response to this teaching is that the prophecy regarding the restoration of the kingdom of Israel was fulfilled through the founding of the Church, which is the spiritual Israel, or it will be perfectly fulfilled in the life to come.

> Through Christ, Jerusalem, the temple, and the worship, as shadows (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 9:1), have become obsolete and abolished once and for all. Ever since Christ has been here, the time will no longer come for Ezekiel (40–48) with the vision of the new priestly Jerusalem; there is no other temple except the community of Christ Himself. And ever since Christ has been here, the gathering of the people of Israel from the diaspora is no longer significant for the history of salvation, because the special significance of the country, of Jerusalem, of the kingdom of Israel, and of its worship has passed. Since then the diaspora of Israel is just as insignificant a theological theme as is the diaspora of the German people before the world . . . Israel as a historical people no longer has any theological greatness, nor is it a factor in the history of salvation; ever since Christ, Israel has fulfilled its mission in the history of salvation.[34]

Chiliasm asserts that Christian hope is fulfilled in the immanent plane of history. It claims that if God's saving work is a "yes" for this history of ours, this "yes" must also be manifested at the end. The chiliasts say that history must be perfected: "But the perfection of history means the historical character of perfection . . . Christ's Church appears in history, struggles in history, [and] it is in history that she must attain perfection and victory; she suffered in the world and because of the world, and therefore she must be shown to the world in her glory."[35] "History cannot reach the end until Christ has subjected to His dominion, on the last day of history, all the forms, institutions, and historical movements."[36]

From a theological point of view, chiliasm cannot be sustained, and it is contradictory in itself. As regards moderate chiliasm, one can ask: If the Church's perfection in time occurs before the coming of Christ, why would the coming of Christ still be awaited? As regards strict chiliasm, the question arises: Do not the coming of Christ as such and the general resurrection necessarily mean the end of history and of creation's present form? Therefore how can there be any place for an intermediary kingdom? Or if this is the final perfection, what else does the Kingdom of Heaven have to add, following the "millennium"? Is not the hope for the final Kingdom thus weakened? Furthermore, because chiliasm sets a provisional target, an intermediary level between our present history and the final perfection, it must tear apart what it holds together undivided and paint a contradictory picture. Chiliasm admits that the first step of perfection is "the salvation of the community," and "the salvation of the world" is distinct from this. But how can the community be separated from humanity and from the world? The resurrection and the perfection of the community cannot be something isolated. Our death is not only our death, but also the death of creation's present form. Our resurrection is not only our resurrection, but it is the radical renewal of the entire creation. The resurrection of the dead in a final historical kingdom, a "transfigured community" on the old earth, is nothing but "mythology."[37] How can bodies be incorruptible in the present form of creation? And if the bodies of those who are resurrected are corruptible, how can they live a thousand years, and how can they be protected from diseases and bodily needs? And how can those with mortal bodies fight against those who do not die for a thousand years?

In addition to this, why would one wish for happiness in this world before obtaining the one in the eternal plane? What would such a happiness consist of? If it were the dominion of the meek, how would it be maintained in this world? If it were a dominion with worldly powers over the others, how would it be fitting for those who seek to be spiritually superior? Does not this mean that those who would rule in this way would be no better than those who are dominated, and thus that they expect this dominion as vengeance for previous humiliations, a vengeance that gives them a more certain and more concrete joy than the spiritual and problematic joy from the other world? The chiliast hypothesis lacks all concern for the spiritualization of the human person.

C. Conjectures about the World's Final Moments

The Savior declared that no one knows the day and the hour when He will come, "not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the

Father only" (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32). "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt 25:13; Mark 13:33; Luke 12:40). It is up to the Father alone to choose this moment. All calculations that start from arbitrarily interpreted numbers (Dan 7:2; 9:25; Rev 12:14, etc.), and then set the days, months, and eras as precise dates, cross the boundary that God set for the human person's ability to foresee and to establish the true meaning of revelation's symbols, which are prophecies that will fully come to light after their fulfillment.

Given this boundary set by the Savior, one can only conjecture about the general conditions of the historical moment that could justify the end of the world.

It seems that, from the point of view of social structures and of intellectual and scientific development, the world will generally follow a progressive line. And the opinion of most theologians of more recent times is that Christianity should not oppose this progress, but should support it, for it could also be progress on the spiritual plane.

But the meaning of this spiritual progress could be understood in many ways. That is why the end of the world cannot be foreseen with precision.

The Orthodox Fathers and Orthodox theologians have presented the moment that could provoke the end of the world as a state characterized by ambiguity. Symeon of Thessalonica says that the end will come "when love cools, when evil increases and goodness disappears."[38] Therefore evil will have reached its ultimate development. Pavel Florensky, acknowledging that the Spirit will fully appear only after creation in its present form ends, says that this will coincide with a final development of the good: "As the end of History approaches, new, hitherto almost unseen, rosy rays of the coming Unfading Day appear on the cupolas of the Holy Church. Symeon the New Theologian is the first to speak in new tones, differently from the ancient ascetic fathers. In our own Russian Church these tones 'play' like the rising sun on the Feast of Feasts. St. Seraphim of Sarov and the great fathers of the Optina Hermitage (the elders Lev, Leonid, Makarii, and especially Amvrosii) concentrate in themselves, as in a fiery focus, the people's holiness. They are saints who, in part, are no longer monks in the narrow sense. Through them, as through a telescope, one sees Him Who comes. There is a new, special apocalyptic tenor here."[39]

But although history could be considered ripe for the end once it has reached the phase mentioned, in fact it is God who will bring about the end. He alone sees when history is in fact ripe for the end, for the revelation of its meaning as a whole.

The appearance of this meaning is one and the same with the appearance of the Word of God, whom the book of Revelation describes as coming mounted on a white horse and as being "called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (Rev 19:11). The Word of God is also the Reason of God, and as such He is also the meaning of history's unfolding. He will appear in the opened heaven. Heaven will open so that meaning may pour forth from it, the Reason of all things that have been done on earth, and this Reason comes on a white horse, that is, He quickly overturns every hypocritical reason (or word) and every dishonest truth that wishes to oppose Him. He is *faithful* not because He believes, but because He is faithful to the world that He created for a meaning and that He wants to fulfill in Himself; He is *faithful* to those He promised eternal happiness if they work with faith in Him. And He is *true* in opposition to every lie that is intermingled with human life.[40] The Reason from above, according to which the reasons manifested in history were created, will appear in order to fully enlighten the target toward which those reasons were supposed to advance, and will show whether or not they advanced toward it.

D. The Signs and Unseen Cause of the End

According to Holy Scripture, although it is impossible to foresee with certainty the moment of the end of the world, there will be certain signs that may indicate with some probability that the end is approaching. Of course, these signs too are subject to ambiguity. Thus Holy Scripture says on one hand that the end will come unexpectedly, and on the other hand it gives certain signs of its approach.

The Holy Apostle Peter describes the ambiguous character of the approach of the end, declaring that even then some will doubt that the end is drawing near. Therefore the end will come "like a thief": "First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation' . . . But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" (2 Pet 3:3–4, 10).

On one hand the signs of the end given by Scripture seem to be very unmistakable. But on the other hand, due to persistent equivocality, these signs cannot be identified with full certainty. They are:

1. the gospel being preached to all peoples (Matt 24:14);
2. the Jewish people's conversion to Christianity (Rom 11:25);
3. the increase of lawlessness and the cooling of love among human beings (Matt 24:10, 12), the falling away from the faith of many who were deceived by false prophets (Matt 24:5), the increase in warfare and news of wars (Matt 24:6–7), great catastrophes in nature (Matt 24:7, 29);
4. the coming of Enoch and Elijah (Rev 11);
5. the coming of the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:3–11; 1 John 2:18), who together with his lying apostles will work all kinds of signs to deceive men: substituting himself for Christ, he will furiously persecute God's chosen ones (Matt 24:5, 11); and
6. the appearance in the sky of "the sign of the Son of Man" (Matt 24:30), that is, of the cross.

The first and third signs are too general for us to know exactly when they were produced. We also do not know in what sense the conversion of the Jewish people should be understood. The other signs on one hand comprise something mysterious; on the other hand their appearance will not be without some uncertainty. Therefore many will be able to indicate that they are present before they are really produced, and many will be able to contest their reality when they are in fact produced.

Thus history could objectively come close to the end on many occasions, but human beings will not be able to know this subjectively; or certain persons will consider it close to the end, without that actually being the case. Therefore they will continue to marry and to busy themselves with other tasks even when its real end is near. *History will not reach its end by itself, but by the will of God.*

God puts an end to history when He wants, but it seems that this will happen when its continuation would no longer have any true meaning, even if to many this would seem otherwise. Only in their life to come will they realize that it would have been useless for history to continue. This is why Scripture asks people to be prepared for the end, but not to set any date for it (Matt 24:42).

According to some of the Church Fathers, the world will end at a given moment because of God's internal plan. Its end will come through God at the time when it has fulfilled its meaning according to God's plan.

These two ideas—that the world will end through God, but at the time when it will have fulfilled its meaning, which was anticipated by God—are comprised in the affirmations of St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Symeon the New Theologian, who say that first the world above must be fulfilled, and then the end will come. According to St. Maximus, the world above will be fulfilled when all its members are gathered around the head, Christ, so that the body of Christ may be complete.[41] St. Symeon develops this idea, adding that in order for the body of Christ to be filled with all who are preordained to be part of it, those persons must be born on earth:

> The Church is the body of Christ, His bride, the world to come, and the temple of God. The members of His body are all the saints. However, not all of the saints who will please God have yet appeared, nor yet is the whole body of Christ thus complete, nor the world to come yet filled. I say this about God's Church. There are, though, many unbelievers in the world today who will believe in Christ; many sinners and debauched who will repent and change their lives; many undecided who will be persuaded. There are many, a great many, up to the sound of the last trumpet, who will prove well-pleasing to God and who have not yet been born. All those who are foreknown by God must be born, come into being, before the world beyond our world, the world of the Church, of the first-born, of the heavenly Jerusalem, is filled up. Then shall the end come and the fullness of the body of Christ be complete, through those who are fore-ordained by God to become conformed to the image of His Son. They are the sons of light and of His day. These are then the fore-ordained who are inscribed and numbered, who shall be added and joined to the body of Christ. And then, when as it

> were the whole is realized, when no member is lacking, then shall it be fulfilled, completed.[42]

St. Gregory of Nyssa had previously expressed this idea when he said,

> Christ builds Himself up through those who are being added to the faith. He will cease to build Himself up when the body reaches its full measure of growth and perfection and there is nothing to be added, all being built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles . . . If, being the head, He continues to build up His body through those who are being added, strengthening all and articulating each one's specificity in line with each one's activity so that one may be hand, or leg, or eye, or ear, or something else that completes the body, according to each one's faith, and thus He builds Himself up as He said, then it is clear that by dwelling in all He receives within Himself all who unite themselves with Him through the partaking of His body, and He makes them members of His body so that they might be many members but one body.[43]

The end of the world will come when the world, or the body of Christ, is spiritually completed as a unitary and harmonious spirituality. The unity of that world has to comprise the totality of forms of individually incorporating Christ's divine-human spirituality. Surely, the fullness of union will be achieved on the other side. But over there are realized the things that are aspired to over here.

It is difficult to understand why this totality is defined by numbers and does not instead imply an infinity of individual forms. Perhaps this definite character of the totality of forms of spirituality is necessary for the finite spirit so that each one might be able to understand all others. The divine spirituality expressed in human form acquires a definite shape, without ceasing to be experienced as infinite in its depth. However, perhaps the main reason why the number of persons who complete the Lord's mystical body is definite, is that an infinite number of persons cannot be loved. Infinite love must also be focused on a finite number of persons. Neither is divinity made up of an infinite number of persons, but the hypostases that love one another are themselves infinite. Similarly, human persons who love each other experience the infinite in the Lord's body, through the unitary love in Him, or in the Holy Trinity, but not in infinite divine centers.

But the definite shape of spirituality probably refers not only to the limited number of persons in whom it is experienced, but also to the modalities in which Christ's spirituality is experienced and expressed by the world of created spirits, although this does not exclude their experience of infinitude or their advancement in Christ, who is infinite and one, through each modality. Persons form groups on earth so that they may experience richer modalities of incorporating the divine spirituality of the new humanity's head, Christ, in varied and continually changing relationships. But in the world to come, each person, although he represents a modality of incorporating Christ's infinite spirituality, will have and will understand all others more fully than he did here. This is because there everyone will experience Christ's entire spirituality in His mystical body, but in a different form. On the other hand the entire divine and human spirituality that is concentrated in Christ, the head of deified humanity's body, will be actualized through the members of His body. Every aspect of the treasure found in Christ will be valued in His mystical body, due to the innumerable natural capacities, heightened by grace, that His members represent.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that in His vision God looks upon humanity as a whole, and if He had not foreseen their fall, human beings would have been born in a different way and all would have appeared in existence at once.[44] The fact that as a consequence of sin they are born successively causes each person to wait for his complete realization until all are born. Each person's complete birth is somehow conditioned by the birth of all at the end of the world. The divine image is common to the fullness of humankind. "Because creation exists from its very beginning by the divine power, the end of each created being is linked to its beginning . . . Human nature is also created but does not, like other created beings, advance toward its perfection, but right from the beginning it is created perfect."[45] Due to the Fall the human species "has difficulty rediscovering through the successive generations its numerical and ontological integrity, that is to say complete liberty, or rather freedom from the yoke of the flesh."[46]

If we were to combine the reasons why history unfolds toward its end with the reason why God will stop it when He wills, we might say that the world will end when on one hand there are no longer any more humans who will complete the world from above, in order to express one of the features of Christ's spirituality, and on the other hand when those who appear will no longer take anything from the world and develop this within the world. The world will end when in it one can no longer develop the infinite spirituality that is concentrated in Christ. This exhaustion of history will be neither accidental nor forced by divine providence, but it will be due to history's mysterious convergence and encounter with the divine order, which does not exclude either human freedom or divine work. God's refusal to continue to reveal new depths through creation will coincide with creation's incapability to seize and develop these depths. The exhaustion of history's power to create and reveal spirituality will be a sign that the world above is completed.

By combining these two causalities to explain the end of history, we respond to the possible assertion that because history ends with the exhaustion of its abilities to ever again grasp or develop within its framework the potentialities that God planted in it—potentialities that are concentrated, actualized, and revealed in Christ—history is a failure of God's operation.

The very fact that humankind is destined to resurrection (whose basis was laid by Christ), and specifically to a resurrection in solidarity with others on the plane of an absolute and eternally happy life, shows that God has prepared something much higher for humankind, and the history of creation is only a phase of human existence in which humankind too may contribute to its growth toward this absolutely happy life.

Besides, history has developed—if not in a uniform manner, at least in a dual (ambiguous) manner—the potentialities that were planted in it by God and renewed and made perfect by Christ. It has shined the brightest light upon (within the relative limits that belong to it) the theme of the human person as the supreme being within the visible creation, destined to know God's work and to know his own value, which is superior to that of all creatures. If every person does not make use of this maximum development of human potentialities—so that through them he might see beyond himself and be united with the incarnate God, in order to develop infinitely beyond his finite immanence—this is due to human freedom, which God does not want to annul.

CHAPTER 7

THE COMING OF CHRIST AND THE IMAGE OF THE WORLD MADE NEW

The events named in this chapter title are shrouded in the deepest mystery. They have an apophatic and pneumatic character. Through them the plane of immanent existence is transcended. They will somehow occur simultaneously. The world will change with lightning speed. At the same time, from the bosom of the transfigured earth the pneumatized bodies of the dead will arise, and the bodies of the living will be transformed into resurrected bodies. Simultaneously, the Second Coming of the Lord will take place. Properly speaking, the light of His resurrected body will transform the present form of the world, and this will be the reason for the resurrection of the dead. That is why the day when all this will take place is called "the day of the Lord."

The Holy Apostle Peter's statement that the elements of the world will burn up (2 Pet 3:10) is also shrouded in mystery. It could mean that a decomposition of the present world will precede the new world; this would demonstrate that the form of this world, which adapted itself to human life after the Fall, must undergo a true decomposition in order to be renewed, just as the human person must pass through death for the same reason.[1]

But this destructive act that precedes the appearance of the world's new image must be produced with lightning speed, for the Holy Apostle Paul says that the living will be transformed in an instant (1 Cor 15:52); thus the transformation of the world and the resurrection of the dead must occur in an instant. But unlike in a material fire, the dissolution of the world's present form will be at the same time its appearance in a new image. This blaze that comes like lightning has a superior cause, and its purpose is to cleanse the world of the soot of evil and to place it in a state of spiritual transparence. But perhaps this fire is a combination of superior and natural causes.

Nevertheless, this transformation of the world is caused by the fact that the Lord draws near to the world. It could be exclusively the effect of the light and the spiritual "fire" of the Lord's body. This could also induce a material fire. The hymns from Thomas Sunday say that the Lord's side was made of fire, but God prevented Thomas from being burned by this fire. Thus it can be felt as fire especially by evil persons. So much more does the fire shine forth from the eyes of the Lord.[2] In any case, the Lord is the ultimate reason why the old world will be consumed and the new one will appear. The created world is potentially comprised in the non-incarnate divine Person. The transfigured world is comprised in the Person of the incarnate Word, with His bodily resurrection. In this the superiority of the person vis-à-vis nature is affirmed, as is the latter's dependence on the former. From the words and face of any person there radiates a superior power, due to the spirit. So much more does a power radiate from the Lord's face. If the world was created by means of His word, now it is transformed through the light of the face and eyes in which God clothed Himself so that matter might be made in the image of the resurrected body's matter. And if in the beginning bodies were given breath through the breathing of the non-incarnate God, they now rise up through the entire power that shines forth from His resurrected body, and this power is His Spirit. "For He who formed [the body] in the beginning from the slime of the earth is not incapable of raising it up again after it has again been dissolved and returned to the earth whence it was taken by the decision of its Creator."[3] St. Symeon the New Theologian says, however, that on one hand the world will be transformed "at God's command" and on the other hand it will be "set aflame by the divine fire,"[4] and thus not by a material, natural fire.

With His coming, the Lord on one hand burns up the hardened image of the world, and on the other hand He makes it new, adapting it to His resurrected body and to the new human bodies. As His resurrected body draws near, it will also produce the resurrection of human persons, through the power radiating from it.

St. Symeon the New Theologian affirms the solidarity between the condition of the world's new image and the condition of resurrected bodies in this way: "It is so because it was not fitting that men's bodies should be restored and made incorruptible before the renewal of all the creation. Instead, just as the created world was first brought into existence as incorrupt, and then later, man, so again it is creation which must first be transformed from corruption into incorruption, changed, and then, together with it and at the same time, the corrupted bodies of men will be renewed, such that, himself become at once spiritual and immortal, man may have an incorrupt, and spiritual, and everlasting country in which to make his home."[5] The world's present image is adapted to the need for nourishment; in it matter is in a continual transformation. It is an image dominated by the laws of decomposition and recomposition. It is an image that the world adopted because of men, not vice versa. This is why creation "waits for the revealing of the sons of God" so that it may manifest its true image (Rom 8:19). Only the "stable movement" of an ever-greater union will dominate in the image made new.

Therefore, when human bodies are transformed and freed from corruptibility, the world's image will be transformed in solidarity with them. And just as the resurrected bodies will be like Christ's resurrected body, this body (or the Spirit overwhelmingly present in it) is, properly speaking, the dough that will transform the entire world according to its image. Thus it can be said that the Lord's Second Coming in His resurrected body coincides with the transformation of the world and the resurrection of the dead, causing them simultaneously. When He wants to enter into full pneumatic-corporeal solidarity—not a simply and incompletely spiritual solidarity like now—with this world, it will be transformed according to His image.[6]

Thus Christ's full pneumatic-corporeal reentrance into solidarity with the world is a reentrance through the Spirit, with which His resurrected body is filled. This will be the universal Pentecost with supreme power. Christ's appearance and the world's transformation signify that the world is lifted up into a state transfigured by the Spirit who is in Christ, or the Spirit with whom Christ is filled will be completely extended over the world. Then the Spirit will no longer work secretly in the world as in the present time, but He will openly show the effect of His work. The radiance from Tabor will be extended over the whole world. The world will then be the generalized Tabor. The divine life in Christ's body will fill the whole world. But this will not be the divine essence, but the light and glory that emanate from it as the plenitude of the uncreated energies. Through this the entire creation becomes pneumatic, incorruptible, deified, and transparent. However, in order to become capable of such a renewal, the present form of the world must die, just as the present form of the body must be destroyed so that it may rise up in a form capable of being a complete vessel for the divine Spirit. This will give the world an unimaginable beauty.

Without disappearing materially, the world will be so bathed in spirituality that instead of the spirit being visible through matter, matter will be visible through the spirit, as St. Gregory Palamas says. Subjects will directly experience each other reciprocally, being filled with spirituality that overwhelms matter, just as two persons experience each other in a perfect communion, looking into each other's eyes and forgetting the existence of material reality. This will make subjects no longer exterior to each other, but reciprocally inside one another.

Ultimately, the very matter of things and bodies in their present form is light. Their material light will be then penetrated and overwhelmed by the immaterial uncreated light, which will surpass individual separations, causing them to lose their sharpness.

St. Symeon the New Theologian says,

> As I have said several times, all creation, too, once made new, will become spiritual, and together with paradise will be transformed into an immaterial, unchanging, eternal, and intelligible dwelling place. The sky on one hand will be incomparably brighter, in a manner indeed quite new, other and brighter than our visible sky, while the earth on the other hand will take on a new and inexpressible beauty, an unfading verdure, ornamented by shining flowers, varied and spiritual. It will be an earth in which, as the sacred word has it, righteousness will have its dwelling place [2 Pet 3:13]. The sun of righteousness will shine sevenfold more brightly, and the moon will gleam twice as bright as the sun which illumines it now. The stars will be like our sun . . . All things there are beyond speech, transcend thought, save only that they are spiritual and divine, joined to the intelligible world, and comprise another, intellectual paradise and heavenly Jerusalem, made like and united to the angelic world.[7]

St. Symeon the New Theologian therefore dares to call this world "an immaterial, spiritual dwelling place, beyond any perception of the senses"; it is not "material and perceptible,"[8] so that it may be an adequate dwelling place for the body that is "wholly spiritual and immutable."[9] St. Symeon describes in paradoxical terms the mystery of that world and of those material but pneumatized bodies. Only the surpassing of nature through the subjectivization of persons who are filled with the supreme divine love can allow a certain understanding of this state. "'The righteous shall inherit the land' [Ps 37:29]. This certainly does not mean the perceptible earth, for how could that be, seeing that they lay claim to becoming spiritual, but an altogether spiritual and immaterial world, one where the righteous may be, as it were, embodied in a bodiless way, may enter into a perception which transcends the senses, and, themselves circumscribed, may be as uncircumscribed among the uncircumscribed beings, and so possess a dwelling place worthy of their glory."[10]

St. Symeon compares these bodies with those of the angels, who are "somehow embodied and circumscribable, at least when compared to the absolutely immaterial and bodiless nature of divinity . . . Relative to our nature, however, they are wholly bodiless, ungraspable, and invisible."[11]

The result of what St. Symeon and other Church Fathers have said is a gradation of materiality, corporality, and sensibility in the created world, in its levels and stages. The new world and our resurrected bodies attain a maximum degree of immateriality and spirituality through deification by grace, yet they still maintain their materiality and sensibility according to nature, and all of them become maximally transparent mediums for the pneumatized soul and for divinity. As the human person's face and even his whole body are spiritualized matter in comparison with the matter of animal bodies, which are also ranked among animate matter (in contrast with mineral formations), so in the resurrected state the whole world and human bodies will attain a new and supreme level of spirituality. But they still remain matter, just as glass still remains glass when the solar rays that pass through it receive a certain beauty and a new mode of being perceived, due to glass' capacity to become a special medium for the transmission of those rays. "If we are to be like God's angels in the age to come . . . then it is clear that we shall be similar to them, if not in nature, then in dignity."[12] In the resurrected state transfigured matter still remains matter.

All the light that will fill and overwhelm the world will shine forth from Christ's body. The ocean of that light, like the divine world, will overwhelm the entire creation.

St. Symeon the New Theologian believes that even the sun and the stars, together with all the forms of the world, will be overwhelmed but not obliterated by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and by the light radiating from His body. Not only will that light transform the world into a luminous reality, but its content will also be a permanent reality. The light of Christ's face in particular, as the light of the Person who was perfect God and yet manifested Himself as perfect man, will overwhelm all external lights. From the human person comes all the light that illuminates the surrounding things with meaning and that gives an increased meaning to the existence of nearby persons. From Christ's human face, which is the medium through which the endless understanding and goodness of the divine Person shines forth, the light that will overwhelm everything will be extended over everything and over all who opened their hearts to see and feel it; it will reveal the full meaning of their existence.

That is why the day in which that Sun will appear will be "the day of the Lord" *par excellence*, the day of the unending light. "It is called this because He Himself, the God and Master of all, will at that time shine with the glory of His own divinity. Even the physical sun will be hidden by the radiance of the Master and will become invisible, just as now the stars are eclipsed by the former and not seen. The stars will then be quenched and all visible things will be rolled up like a scroll, that is, they will give way and yield their place to the Master. And He alone will be at once 'Day' and God. He who is now invisible to all and dwells in light will then be revealed to all as He is, and will fill all things with His light, and will be without evening, without end, a day of everlasting joy."[13]

Properly speaking, this appearance of the Lord will also be a judgment: it will shed God's light on all those who lived in communion with the Lord and also on all their past thoughts and words, which will now be purified of everything imperfect in them; and yet it will also leave in darkness all those who on earth did not live in the light of communion with Him. Nothing will be concealed in either group, and any conceal-ment of good or of evil will cease. For those who have God's grace in themselves and have cooperated with Him on earth, when they leave here the grace "becomes itself the day of divine judgment by which he who is purified is continually illumined, sees himself as he is in truth and in every detail, and all his works for what they are, whether done by the body or acted on by the soul."[14]

Christ's luminous face will illumine all persons and all things. Things will no longer appear as independent of persons, but as their common content, as a means to manifest the love of Christ and of the angelic and human persons in a panpersonalism of perfect communion.

In contrast, for those who are incapable of communion, the judgment will not consist of their presentation before God; instead they will be left to themselves and will sink into the darkness of their individualities. The "day of everlasting joy" will be "absolutely unapproachable and unseen for those who, like me, are lazy and sinners. Because this did not happen while they yet lived, because they lacked zeal to see the light of His glory and, through purification, to have Him completely indwelling in themselves, He will also naturally be unapproachable for them in the future."[15] For these evil ones who are closed off within themselves, we cannot say that a part of the world will be reserved, and thus not illuminated by the divine Sun. As an objective world, this world cannot remain unillumined in any of its parts. But the subjects who closed themselves off to any communion cannot be illumined against their will. They will remain hermetically closed within the prison of their being, in the darkness of their desolate "I"s, in the "outer darkness" separated from the world and other persons, for the world cannot be truly seen outside communion.

But although the light of Christ's face will cover the entire world and the subjects who are open to Him, this does not mean that they will disappear. On the other hand every individual on every spiritual level will partake, according to his level and mode, of this sea of light that is the communion of all.

> And then, as in a great mansion or royal palace where there are many rooms where one may rest and sojourn, and where there are great differences among the rooms although all are splendid, so in this new creation will our Lord make distinctions, apportioning to each his inheritance according to his worthiness, and according to the radiance and splendor which is proper to

> each from his virtues and his works. Given that these things are spiritual, translucent, and joined to the divine abiding and rest, it follows that the Kingdom of Heaven is entirely like—rather, is in fact—a single great hearth, as shall be clear to all the righteous. It possesses the King of all, everywhere and uniquely visible to all, dwelling with each one, and uniting each to Himself, and shining in each, and making each to shine in Himself.[16]

On the other hand, although St. Symeon affirms that the judgment already occurs because those who have become capable of communion are illumined and those who are not capable of communion are left in the darkness, elsewhere he also speaks of a judgment that will apply to all at the end.[17] We will speak of this judgment later on. Here we dwell for a short while on the beauty in which all will be placed through the divine light that is extended over all.

Once it has become a perfect medium for and transparent instrument of divinity, the world will at the same time reveal its unimaginable beauty. Even now it partly reveals itself as beautiful to those who use the grace they have received through the Church's mysteries in order to become spiritualized, purify their vision, and see things and persons in a pure manner.

The world will then reveal its beauty fully, not only because it will be covered with a light brighter than any light, but also because that light will reveal all the beauty in it that was kept in darkness by the human passions and by the disorder that these passions introduced into it. Only then will the world's deep meanings be fully revealed and will light be shed on its wonderful features. The intelligible world, with which the sensible world will be united, is none other than the world of ideas and forms according to which the latter was made, and this union will make the intelligible world's forms and ideas transparent. The entire world will be transparent for the sake of its meanings and the harmonies of these meanings, which lead to the divine infinitude more fully than any present work of art does. Properly speaking, all brilliant works of art created in history are nothing but pale foretastes of what the entire world will be then. At that time the entire world and its components will surpass the state of opaque objects. St. Symeon speaks of spiritual flowers and calls the entire world spiritual and intelligible,[18] as it is no longer a world of objects that are external to persons. A song that a person fully makes his own and lives with for a long time has become a spiritual content; it enriches, sensitizes, and stimulates his spiritual life. It is the same with any work of art that someone's spirit fully assimilates. But at that time the entire world will become, in an incomparably fuller way, a giant work of art and an unimaginably beautiful spiritual content for everyone. This is perhaps one of the meanings of its character as a spiritual world. At the same time the entire artistic creation that emphasized the beauty of the earthly world and did not tempt us to sin in any way, but rather revealed the purity of the world and of persons—that is, their authentic nature illumined by God—will become a truly beautiful spiritual content.

If the world remains an object for us, then for us it is a somewhat external world, but one that is perfected through works of art. But in the eternal life the world will cease to be an object that is useful for our body; it will become a spiritual content through beauty. The world will then become a great beauty, because it will be pure, and because incorruptible bodies will no longer need it for consumption; human persons will no longer struggle because they are greatly concerned with obtaining the necessary things from it. Thus beauty conditions and expresses the highest revelation of the personal spirit, of the spirit's intimate relationship with reality in communion with other subjects. The amount of pure spirit in a song or a poem is also the amount of beauty found in such a work, and to that degree it can become a spiritual content, facilitating the communion among persons. The new world will not have within it anything of the simple external object, anything imposed, anything that might provoke fights and rouse the passions. It will, however, be revealed as a means for pure love and for the manifestation of the personal God, as a means of communion between human beings and God and between human beings themselves, who will have fully assimilated the world subjectively and interpersonally in its pure beauty.

The entire world will then be a spiritual content to a great degree. Thus it will be eternally new. For the more we increase in our capacity to know God, the more will we see His richness through the world's beauty and the more will we praise Him, while at the same time we will know ourselves in all our indefinite richness. Sergius Bulgakov considers that the incessant doxology that the angels lift up to God is creative art, and all human creation on earth is a ray from their artistic activity. The angels praise God incessantly because they are awed upon learning of new mysteries from God and they partake of His light.[19]

It has been given to human beings to contemplate the divine beauty in material forms, to spiritualize them and make them transparent. But now, because the human spirit has been weakened as a result of sin, only rarely do human beings grasp the beauty hidden in words, in forms, and in sounds. And only rarely can they capture it in artistic achievements, even though both they and the entire creation are called to praise God together, knowing and revealing His indescribable beauty by means of the world. Whatever they capture in a form undistorted by the impure temptation toward sin is a glimmer of the beauty that shines forth from the divine source of beauty, sometimes through the angelic world.[20] "The white ray of the Divine Sun is transcendent to color; it is without color, for it is beyond color, it embraces all possible colors and tints in itself . . . These forms and tints bedeck the world with color, creatively mirrored in figurative art. It anchors in the forms of earthly life these heavenly visions, and it sees the supernatural in nature . . . Beauty in the world and in art is for us a perceptible ladder between heaven and earth."[21] The reasons (or inner principles) of the harmonies of the inexhaustible divine beauty are rendered through all the combinations of colors, images, harmonious sounds, and words.

If it is difficult for the divine light to penetrate the world's present image, in order to give the things and human persons in it the radiance of divine beauty, the new world will have an unimaginable beauty through the effect that the abundant overflowing of the divine light will produce in it. Everything will be unspeakably beautiful, because everything will have a deep spiritual significance and will clearly reflect the infinite Spirit who will penetrate everything. That beauty, so evident and so incessantly new, will be incessantly admired and sung of, and this will cause human persons and the angels to continuously praise God, the source of beauty.

The world will thus be a construction of objects; an ensemble of works of art that have profound significance and spiritual richness; and a continual medium for revealing the realities of the spirit, in order to communicate the spirituality that shines through the spirit. The world will be like a familiar expression of itself; it will be a medium for and an intimate content of its spiritual life, an intimate organ of the common spiritual life or of the communion with God and with neighbors. Each person will fully absorb the world in a spiritual way within himself, and for each one it will be wholly and perfectly familiar, yet still inexhaustible as a means of manifesting the divine Spirit's plenitude. The world will be fully personified by each person, and it will be the common body of all; each person will inherit the entire earth. St. Symeon the New Theologian says that because of sin no one has inherited the earth, nor has it fully become anyone's abode, nor has anyone ruled in it except for a short time. For all of us have become, are, and will be strangers and sojourners on the earth; all are somehow strangers on it, as the Scripture says (Ps 39:12; 119:19). "When therefore all things earthly shall be united with heavenly, then shall the righteous inherit this earth made new, the earth which the meek, whom our Lord declared blessed, have as their inheritance."[22] The human spirit will no longer feel like a stranger to the visible world, for the world too will be spiritualized, and in this world the human person will not be transient but eternal.

Incorruptibility also belongs to the spirituality of that image of the world. This is in solidarity with the incorruptibility of resurrected bodies. If resurrected bodies do not drink or eat, and if they do not receive or eliminate any matter and thus do not corrupt,[23] then the world's substance will have to correspond to them. St. Maximus the Confessor says that the present corruptibility of substance is due to sin.[24] In the life to come, the world could have another form of existence and another movement. Also, man could nourish himself from it differently: with its radiant and life-giving energy. Its life and movement could be continually revelatory, helping all to increase in communion. This is a life and a movement by which the world will nevertheless remain the same. In the same way, the song we sing and the word we speak will become increasingly intimate to us, revealing more and more beauty and meanings, and through their spiritual power nourishing not only the soul, but the body as well. It will be a vertical spiritual movement, along lines of spiritual convergence and of the spirit's fuller assimilation of matter.[25] The indefinite faces of reality do not have to succeed each other through the disappearance of other faces, but can coexist. Thus they can reveal in themselves more and more depths and complexities to be contemplated and assimilated within all in common in a more accentuated way. In this world the sadness of death will no longer exist, nor will the sadness of the past, which always devours the faces of reality.

CHAPTER 8

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Resurrected bodies will be, as we have said, in solidarity with the world made new. Methodius of Olympus placed the bodily resurrection in solidarity with the world's renewal based on the argument that God has created nothing in vain. The death of bodies and the end of creation's present form are due to the sin that entered into bodies, and the purpose of these events is that through death the human body and the world's substance may be cleansed of the thickness that results from sin, so that they may be brought back into existence purified and spiritualized, made fine.[1]

St. Symeon the New Theologian develops the same idea: "How, then, are all things to be dissolved? In just the way that a copper vessel, when it has grown old and become quite spoiled and useless on account of rust, is taken by the craftsman and put in the fire to be re-forged by him and formed again as new. In the same way, creation, too, after having grown old and been spoiled by our sins, is dissolved in fire by the Maker of all, and then forged anew and transmuted, and becomes incomparably brighter and newer than the world which we see now."[2] But this restoration of creation is effected in order to correspond to the beauty of resurrected persons. St. Symeon bases this on these words of the Holy Apostle Paul: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom 8:18–19). Starting from these words, St. Symeon says, "By 'eager longing' he means burning desire, and by 'revealing' he means its manifestation in the resurrection. At that time, by virtue of the second coming of Christ our God, the sons of God must be revealed and their beauty appear fully as what in truth they are. So it is written: 'Then the righteous will shine like the sun' [Mt 13:43]."[3]

Regarding those who said that men will be like the angels and thus they will not receive their bodies back, Methodius of Olympus observed that God had a purpose when He created men as men and angels as angels. It would be injurious to God if we thought that He had changed His mind and meant to change men into angels. Each will keep his place for eternity.[4] Therefore the human person will rise up with the body.

But if it is difficult to define the form of the new world, it is even more difficult to define the form of resurrected bodies. We always find ourselves before a pneumatic, apophatic order. The Holy Apostle Paul gives only six general definitions regarding these bodies, as opposed to another six definitions regarding our present bodies. If the present bodies are weak, natural or physical, corruptible, mortal, earthly, and covered with dishonor, those bodies will be filled with power, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, heavenly, and clothed in glory (1 Cor 15:42–52). But each of these definitions comprises a wealth of meanings that is difficult to define in detail.

First we must specify that the designation "spiritual body" should not be understood in the sense of a body that has only the "form" (μορφή) of this life and not the substance as well.

This theory, which Methodius of Olympus attributes to Origen,[5] was rejected by the former with the argument that the "form" cannot be separated from the "flesh," but it deteriorates with it. Methodius then argues that for this reason the form that would rise up would not be the form from this life, but another form. Or if this form pertains to the soul, after its separation from the body one cannot properly speak of a resurrection. Then Christ is no longer "the firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18).[6] Methodius also attributes to Origen the idea that the soul has that form by nature, as an organ that would form or would develop into an ethereal, very fine body.[7] Today some theologians contest the fact that Origen had such ideas. The fact is that Origen instead maintained that a new body would be raised up from the soul at the end. This means that the bodily resurrection itself is opposed to the theory that at the resurrection the soul, which has in its nature a power of molding, a "*forma corporeitatis*," will mold for itself a new body that is totally different from the one in this life.[8]

Regarding these theories, we should affirm, based on the Fathers' affirmations, that resurrected bodies will also have a material content that is not only a form but something of the material content they had on earth, even if this is only a small part of the matter that passed through them during life.[9] Therefore after the resurrection human beings will experience these resurrected bodies as the very bodies they had on earth, as identical with them.[10] The Fathers say that due to their good or evil deeds, souls will have to rejoice or suffer together with the bodies that they had. Otherwise the logic of the resurrection is weakened.

It is understood that this identity of form, and of substance to some degree, also implies a personal identity. Each resurrected person will have his own body with his personal characteristics. It will be not only an identity of species, in the sense that resurrected bodies will be generally human but will not be distinct through personal characteristics. Along these lines, Catholic theologians speak of a specific and individual (or, more precisely, numerical) identity.[11]

But we mentioned before that resurrected bodies will have a pneumatic character. They will not be external to themselves and will not have an objective character in as hardened a way as earthly bodies do. The teaching about the Lord's body—which after His Resurrection passed through locked doors and which we all receive within ourselves especially when we eat it, although it does not cease to be the Lord's body and not ours—conceals a truth of a more general order: resurrected bodies will be pneumatized; matter will be overwhelmed by the Spirit. Through this our bodies will somehow cease to be impenetrable and nonpenetrating. New discoveries about matter as energy can make it easier for us to understand something of the resurrected body's qualities. However, we should avoid definitions that are too insistent in this regard, lest we run the risk of falling into a kind of naturalism. For in this life we do not have at our disposal categories that are capable of adequately rendering the state of bodies after the resurrection. Thus we cite Nicholas Lossky's attempts at definition under the heading of sensible approximations of the truth.

Nicholas Lossky says, "Members of the Kingdom of God, since they do not enter into the relation of opposition with anybody, commit no acts of repulsion in space. Hence they do not have material (impenetrable) bodies. Their *transfigured* bodies consist only of the manifestations of light, sound, warmth, etc. These bodies do not exclude each other and are not egoistically isolated, but are capable of inter-penetration."[12]

Matter, says Lossky, became thick, impenetrable, only after the Fall into sin, only to serve egoistic exclusiveness. Once sin ceases, the state of impenetrability of bodies will also cease.[13] But the interpenetration of resurrected bodies will have no trace of the earthly interpenetration's shortcomings. "It is directly the opposite of any kind of licentiousness. It is as pure and fresh as the innocent kiss of a child."[14]

The idea of this universal penetration of resurrected bodies allows Lossky to speak of a "universal body"[15] after the resurrection. Through interpenetration the members of the Kingdom of God, "having attained concrete consubstantiality, i.e. accepting each other's strivings and the counsels of the Divine Wisdom, . . . *collectively create* the Kingdom of perfect Beauty and every Good. They even build their own bodies in such a way that being interpenetrable, they are not in their exclusive possession, but serve all, complementing each other and forming individual totalities, which are organs of the all-embracing whole of the Kingdom of God."[16] In this way we all "become one body of Christ," according to St. Gregory of Nyssa.[17]

More specifically, Lossky affirms that each person's body will be universal like that of Christ; it will somehow be the bearer of the bodies of all men and of the entire world. With this theory Lossky can explain two things.

First, everything that passed through someone's body in life will again be in this universal body, "but not in egotistic exclusiveness."[18]

Second, each person shares in the entire happiness of all and partakes of the entire life of the heavenly Kingdom. "Being in the state of communion with the life of God, they possess the all-embracing power of attention, memory, etc., and take part in the life of the whole world, so that the whole world, *in so far as there is some good preserved in it,* serves them as a body."[19] "In the Kingdom of God death in the wide sense of the word, that is death in the form of oblivion, conditioned by disruptions which are characteristic of the kingdom of the psychophysical being, is also overcome. A member of the Kingdom of God, being closely connected with the whole world, stands above its disruptions. Hence in his memory there occurs the resurrection of all the past in its wholeness, and consequently he understands its absolute positive value. This re-establishment of the continuity of connection is an even more profound resurrection than the re-establishment of the body and its immortality."[20]

Surely, because resurrected bodies are pneumatic, we think that they are above the natural impenetrability of earthly bodies. But it seems that the application of the theory of penetrability, opposed to earthly impenetrability, has something of the natural order in it. In addition to this, Lossky seems to subject the resurrected bodies to other two natural categories, opposed but not superior to the natural categories of earthly bodies.

First, he seems to divide the resurrected body into "manifestations of light, sound, warmth, etc.,"[21] which are natural too, and which also do not bring into relief the unity proper to each body. But we know that the Lord's resurrected body could be seen and touched as a whole and known as His personal body, which shows that it preserved its unity and personal characteristics.

Second, he leaves the impression that the individual, becoming the bearer of the universal body, no longer has the experience either of his own personal body or of others' bodies as distinct bodies, as well as the impression that each person's specific reality is disintegrated and immersed into the universal body.

It is true that Lossky insists on affirming that although every member of the heavenly Kingdom possesses the universal body, this does not mean that the inhabitants of heaven "do not possess individual bodies different from one another, or that possibly they will lose even their individual personal existence"[22]; in the Kingdom of God the authentic individual character of every person is preserved and realized in a perfect manner in the body as well. He affirms both these things together with St. Gregory of Nyssa (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*, PG 46:157) and John Scotus Eriugena. The latter, although he declares that at the end "every being will unite with the Creator and will be one in Him and with Him, . . . however without the destruction or mixture of essences and substances," has a way of expression that does not lack serious ambiguities.[23] Surely, Lossky does well in using this paradoxical language. But precisely because of the necessity of using this language, he shows that the state and relationship of the resurrected bodies cannot be specified in our categories. Nor does the use of paradoxical combinations protect us from the risk of falling into a naturalistic imagery.

We must therefore be content with rather general declarations, by which we retain only what is strictly necessary from the state and relationship of post-resurrectional bodies and by which we discard a naturalistic understanding of them.

For example, we should avoid emphasizing too much that resurrected bodies can only consist of manifestations of light, sound, smell, and warmth. In this case they would be totally mixed together. Each resurrected body is a specific unity, a unique subsistence, although on the other hand they are not totally juxtaposed and separated, as earthly bodies are. The resurrected body's specific unity must correspond to the human soul's specific unity. This integral and specific unity of the body must be felt in all of its manifestations of light or sound. Just as every cell or part remains irreducible in the body but all are in an internal communion, so will these bodies be.

On one hand these bodies must be so united among themselves that each individual is able to experience the relationship with all and to rejoice in the life, awareness, and happiness of all. But at the same time each must have the feeling that his body is distinct from that of the others; he must taste the happiness of the whole in a different way than all others, in a form proper to him, while the others' forms of tasting happiness must not be foreign to him.[24] Similarly, in the universal communion each person has to experience each of the others as who he is, not as confused with others. The universal body cannot mean an immersion of personal bodies into one. Even in this world there is an interpenetration of persons, but none is confused with the others. I have my own ontological definition, but I am not separated from others and from the world. I am in others, and they are in me. Even in communion, the individual units interpenetrate each other. I am in the world and the world is in me, but I remain myself. Even if we use the expression "universal body," in this "universal body" I distinguish my body from others' bodies, and my unique body belongs to me in a different way than those of others do. Each person remains a *unicum* not only in his soul, but also in his body, in the strongest communion.

Where would the beauty be if everyone had everything like everyone else did?

In the heavenly Kingdom Berdyaev sees a subjectification of the objective. On the contrary, Florensky sees Gehenna as a drowning in subjectivism, as an extreme weakening of the relationship with objective reality as "thou." The truth seems to be in a synthesis of these two states, and in this synthesis one can also express the relationship between the resurrected bodies, or between the personal body and the universal one. Each member of the heavenly Kingdom will experience the bodies of all others as his contents, as being united with his body but not identical with his body; he will not experience them as a universal body that is proper to him in an indistinct way. As each one subjectifies the entire reality of his fellow human beings, he does not confuse it with his own self. For at the same time in this universal body, each one distinguishes his own body (as a visible expression of his own self) from the bodies of others, as expressions of his neighbors in a supreme communion. This is the aspect of objectivity. There will be a perfection and universalization of the loving relationship between "I" and "thou," in which on one hand each one feels himself as representing and bearing the dual whole, and not existing except as part of this whole; and on the other hand he distinguishes his own self from the self of the other: "I" and "thou" remain "I" and "thou." Souls go, even in this world, further in their unification through love than bodies. We feel bodies not only as a medium of communication, but also an obstacle on the path of complete unification. In the life to come, it will be possible to have a union that is just as strong through the bodies as well, without the bodies losing their individual existence. It will be more of a union by irradiation: through energies but not through substance. "In another place, Chrysostom says: 'The loved one for the loving one is what he himself is. The nature of love is such that the loving one and the loved one constitute not two separate persons but one man.'[25] Separateness in friendship is only crudely physical, exists only for vision in the most external sense of the word. Therefore, in the sticheron for the day of the Three Bishops, on January 30, one sings of them, who lived in different places, as 'separated in body but united in spirit.' But in communal life even the bodies become one, as it were."[26] But the word "united" is different from the word "confused." In their "friendship" they remain as two persons; they have not become one.

The realization of perfect and equal love through full communication with all, through full knowledge of the mysteries of all, through the warmth of the love and understanding of all, through the disappearance of all suspicions and hidden judgments—this is the Kingdom of Heaven. But its members, however, feel and know themselves as "many."

How weak and how insufficient is earthly love or friendship, which is hindered by so much reticence and so many doubts! And still, love is a heavenly consolation in our lives. It disperses the heavy darkness of the feeling of loneliness, the feeling that you are a broken piece that is prepared to sink into the dark, bottomless ocean of loneliness for lack of any relationship with the great objective reality of dry land, which remains firm but far away from you.

The unity of all in the universal body and their distinction are sustained by the mystical death and resurrection—that is, as a perfect love that is totally free, spiritual, and pure, similar to that of the angels—not by the law of nature or of sex, which is only a fragment from the former and a means to prepare for it.[27]

Heavenly love and friendship are perfect transparence and communication, unhindered by bodies as they are here, but still also being realized in their perfect form through bodies, just as on earth imperfect love is realized through them. For those who love each other know themselves as distinct persons also through bodies that are distinct but in communication with each other. In the organism of universal communion, I distinguish my body as a medium for grasping others' bodies, which I distinguish as mediums through which they manifest themselves. In heaven a pneumatization of the bodies and of the relationships between them takes place; they are not confused in a homogenized "universal body." In the great light of all, the lights of the distinct bodies and souls will be distinguished—or, better said, the lights of persons who are unique in their illuminated souls and bodies will be distinguished.

For resurrected bodies will be made of light, but they will not be without an inner structure, nor will they be like some inconsistent manifestations. If the resurrected body were a simple, luminous, and inconsistent manifestation, the world made new would have to be the same. This is not the Christian teaching. The world will be luminous, but it will have the structural and pneumatized richness of this world.

This world is also a light, as its name shows.[28] But how complex is this light, and how many varied and multiple forms does it pour forth in its unity! Similarly, in the age to come this world's complex and luminous structure will not be dissolved, but intensified to the maximum degree through the light of the Spirit. The Holy Fathers' view is that the world and bodies will be restored, precisely for the reason that God created them good and He does not revisit His decision regarding their existence.[29] Some of the saints call the body "our brother," and St. Seraphim of Sarov calls it "our friend."[30]

In the funeral hymns the body is called our "beauty according to [God's] likeness," or "image of [God's] ineffable glory." St. Gregory of Nyssa calls the body the "co-worker," or man's constitutive part, without which man is not man.[31] But it is a co-worker of the individual man, not of a collective man.

The mystery of the resurrected body and of the restored universe is the mystery of spiritualized matter. Matter, however, is not a monotonous uniformity, but it is organized into units that are connected among themselves through their "reasons." And the human body is just as destined to eternity in its uniqueness as its soul and its person are. Through the Holy Spirit the Lord's individual body is transfigured on Tabor, anticipating its state after the Resurrection and at the Second Coming.[32] Through the Holy Spirit who is extended in them, resurrected bodies will be made according to the image of Christ's body, but they will not be confused either with Christ's body or among themselves. Theophanes Cerameus says, "May we after six days (that is to say, after the passing of this world created in six days) climb the mountain above the heavens where the saints are dwelling and see the brilliant grace of divinity, be covered by the cloud of the Spirit, and know more clearly and more purely the mystery of the Trinity."[33] As we see, one always speaks of the saints in the plural.

The resurrected body remains unchanged according to nature, but it will be spiritualized. It will be changed from corruptible into incorruptible, and it will be raised from humility to the peak of brilliance. But it will not cease to be a body; neither will the body leave its proper natural state. It will, however, be raised from mortal into immortal. It is said, "The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body"

(1 Cor 15:42–44). Even now the bodies of the righteous are spiritualized through the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them.[34] But then they will be finer and lighter, so that they will be able to walk through air, and they will be more spiritualized as well. Theologians say that the Spirit will remain incessantly in the bodies of the righteous. That is why we believe that they will be both flesh and body (καί σάρκα καί σωμα). They will not be imperceptible (άληπτα), just as Christ's body will not be imperceptible (άληπτον) either.[35]

But now we cannot understand the mystery of spiritualized matter. In any case, it will be raised through the Spirit to a new plane of existence, and it will differ much more from the animate matter of our earthly body than the latter differs from inanimate matter. The brain's extraordinarily complex convolutions reflect the complexity of its attention and reactions to all the states of other consciousnesses. Likewise, all the body's animate matter is organized in a unity that is much finer, more complex, more specific, and more penetrated by the spirit than that of animals. Consciousness and the relationships among consciousnesses bring about the whole distinct complexity of the human body. Thus as each body is organized with great finesse in its own unique form, and is penetrated by the unique and complex work of its own soul so that through the soul it may be able to see, hear, and feel all the distinct persons in a unique way, so it will be even more organized on the highest plane of matter's maximum spiritualization.

But no one can describe the mystery and functions of the spiritualized body. No one can describe its spiritual sensibility, its capacity for expressing itself and for perceiving with extraordinary finesse. No one can describe the state of the entire universe's spiritualized matter. We know that in it there will be no corruption, no old age, and no death; we know that it will acquire eternal youth—an unimaginable radiance and beauty—in order to correspond with the state of the resurrected bodies, given the communication and the solidarity between the matter in our body and that in the universe. For although at that time we will not eat or eliminate matter, there will still be a much greater communication between the matter of our body and that of the universe. Matter will neither be completely immobile nor violently agitated. Material energy will be untied from its present chains, and it will even grow, being amplified by the energy of the supreme Spirit. The power of this Spirit will move it, however, in an order and a quiet harmony. The laws of motion and energy, in the first place those relating to bodies, will be overwhelmed by the laws of the Spirit—those of love—and matter will be raised onto the plane of a superior order. Now we do not understand such a new state of matter except in a naturalistic way. But it will be the effect of a great spiritual efficacy, which will influence all the new qualities of matter. We see that there is now a young matter and an old matter: a lively matter that is full of force and agility, and an aged matter that is heavy and sclerotic. And we see how the young matter grows old especially in organisms. The matter of the resurrected universe and of the resurrected bodies will be an energy that is eternally young, diaphanous, perfectly transparent, and very fine; this matter or energy will be found in the beauty of spiritual states and movements, without ceasing to have a consistency or the capacity for taking certain forms. These forms will be the finest expression of the spiritual states, and this consistency will be full of elasticity, to use some of the present world's terms. Thus the transformed universe will have an indescribable beauty, one of great finesse and expressive depth, as will bodies, if sensible beauty consists in the transparence of the spirit's infinite complexity through the forms of matter, if it consists in matter being transfigured by the infinite richness of the spiritual dimensions. That is why certain Christian thinkers say that eternal happiness will consist of beauty.

In any case, Christianity believes in the eternity of matter, that is, of a matter directly transfigured by the spiritual life's power and infinite richness and by the divine energies. Christianity accepts a sort of *mystical materialism* and knows a *holy matter* because the Lord's body is holy, and by receiving His body, our bodies are also made holy. The violent, deficient, and coarse sensibility of the carnal pleasures will be transformed into the sensibility of fine and pure experiences, in which we discover the beauty of communion.

The saint, the ascetic, ascends somewhat even in this life toward this state of holiness and spiritualization. This is why no one understands the body's value, beauty, and great significance like he does, because he experiences a body purged of every violent sensation, and because through the body he manifests the finest delicacy in grasping the spiritual states of others and of himself as well.[36] Also, no one sees and experiences the world like he does, "as an eternal miracle of God,"[37] infinitely nuanced and rich.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that the resurrected body will abandon some of its functions that are necessary for life on earth and will receive some spiritual functions. Although he avoids specific definitions, he still gives certain indications about both the discarded and the received features.

> Therefore, the cause of evil tendencies is not the body, but the free will that departs from the necessary end toward the passion for absurd things. So do not blame . . . the body, which, after it is transformed through the second creation into a more divine one, will beautify the soul. For once death purifies it of useless things, it will be able to enjoy everlasting life. For in the life to come the things that it now seeks will not be useful, but the constitution of the body will be suitable to taste of that life, being able to share in those good things . . . When iron must be transformed into something finer, and the fire carefully purifies its mass, the iron deposits everything earthly and useless, which the masters of this art call slag . . . Let us transfer this idea to our thinking . . . For example, let us put in the place of this mass the passion that works naturally in all, and in the place of slag the things toward which passion tends, that is, pleasures, riches, love of glory, power, anger, pride, and the like. All these are purified by death. Having rid ourselves and being purified of these, passion will turn its action toward the only One worthy of desire and love, without at all quenching these passions naturally implanted in us, but turning them toward participation in the immaterial good things.[38]

St. Gregory of Nyssa considers the resurrection as a restoration to that state (we would say as a restoration to the state that man would have attained had he not sinned), and he considers that state as not only free from passions and diseases, but also from differences in age, since if death had not intervened, neither would aging have intervened:

> First we must understand what the aim is of the doctrine about the resurrection, why this is declared by the holy revelation, and why we believe it. Therefore to describe this doctrine and limit it with a certain definition, we shall say this, that resurrection is the restoration of our nature to its original condition. In the first life, of which God himself became the creator, there was presumably neither old age, nor infancy, nor the sufferings caused

> by the many kinds of diseases, nor any other type of bodily misery; for it is not likely that God created such things . . . All these things attacked us when evil entered our life. Therefore the life without evil will not need to be subject to the conditions which have happened because of evil . . . When our nature became subject to passions, it encountered these conditions which necessarily follow the life of passion; but when it returns again to the passionless blessedness, it will no longer encounter the consequences of evil.[39]

While acknowledging that no one can say anything certain about the qualities of post-resurrectional bodies, St. Gregory still says,

> The restoration will change everything into a more divine state, but it is not easy to imagine how the image (εἶδος) will blossom again, with the good things that we hope for being believed [in a way] beyond our eyes, ears, and thought. Perhaps if someone said that the image according to which each one will be known is the quality of each one's morals, he would not be entirely mistaken. For just as now a certain transformation of the elements in us produces the distinctions in the features of each . . . then each one's form will not be the product of these elements, but it will be due to the attributes of evil or of virtue whose mixture gives the image these or those attributes.[40]

If human persons are now distinct on account of external, "natural" reasons that are independent of their will, then they will be distinct exclusively for moral, voluntary, and spiritual reasons. These differences make them distinct as persons who are spiritually nuanced. The "natural" reasons make them distinct due to external, unfree circumstances and inferior passions; they make them distinct as opposing individuals, not as persons in whom the spirit of communion is expressed. If the passions prompt men to put on a mask, goodness makes them fully sincere, and thus nonuniform. So much more does the heavenly person receive his own characteristics through the spirit.

Whereas today natural differences can conceal moral differences to a great degree, so that we may not be able to discern men's moral states by their appearances (because these states too lose their weight), at that time these states will be reflected so much in men's appearances that their exterior will be overwhelmed by their inner spirituality, which will be very deep and very nuanced. This will allow human persons to see each other with their entire interiors manifested exteriorly; no ambiguity and no dissimulation will be possible or wanted. "I think that as in this life the heart's disposition turns into form (μορφή) and man's image (εἶδος) mirrors the inner passion, so when nature is transformed into something more divine, the human person is shaped through morals, that is to say, he is not in one form and appears in another, but he is known as what he is: for example, the undefiled, the just, the meek, the pure, the pious. Among these is he who possesses all the good qualities, or he who is endowed with only one, or he who has most of them, or he who lacks some but excels in others."[41]

St. Maximus the Confessor thinks that the saint, and therefore the heavenly man to a much greater degree, is characterized by the deification of his body; he has overcome any duality, any contrast between soul and body, due to the Spirit who spiritualizes and deifies both. The body is the perfect instrument for the soul, and the soul is the perfect instrument for the Spirit. Both are governed by affection for God.[42] Commenting on St. Gregory of Nazianzus' statement that the saints rise above the dyad of matter and of bodily form, and all matter becomes "form" (εἶδος)—that is, the expression of a spirituality that has been overwhelmed by God—St. Maximus says,

> I understand the Saints to say that passing beyond the material dyad, on account of the unity the mind perceives in the Trinity, means to find oneself beyond matter and form, in which bodies consist, or beyond flesh and matter, for only those who set these aside are worthy of being assimilated to God and united to the most pure light, that is to say those who have set aside the relationship of the soul to the flesh, and through the flesh to matter—or, to put it more generally, those who have put off the natural conformity of sensible being with what can be perceived through the senses and genuinely acquired a desire for God alone, on account, as I said, of the unity the mind perceives in the Trinity. For they know that the soul is a middle being between God and matter and has powers that can unite it with both, that is, it has a mind that links it with God and senses that link it with matter. When they have completely shaken off the senses and everything perceived through them by means of the activity that relates and inclines it to them, their soul can be

> ineffably assimilated to God by means of the mind alone, and wholly united to him alone ineffably.[43]

St. Gregory of Nyssa considers that the aforementioned distinctions between bodies will last only up to a point, and then a uniformity (ομογενεία) will be produced between them. We do not know how far St. Gregory believes that this uniformity will go. According to him, the distinction between the forms of bodies, for as long as it continues to subsist, is due to a remnant of evil that remains in these bodies. But we think that he does not exclude a certain distinction that is based on the infinite variety of God's creative act and that therefore never completely disappears. Everyone reflects even complete happiness differently. And one person's joy in the other is explained precisely by the fact that in the other each sees what is not in himself, a unique form, as an expression of his spiritual uniqueness.

Correctly interpreting St. Gregory of Nyssa's vision, Bulgakov rightly affirms that neither the male nor the female image of human nature will disappear, although the physical passion that is linked to these images will disappear. The Savior's words that men will be "like angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:36) refer only to the cessation of passion and marriage, not to the cessation of the male and female images, as is shown in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His Mother. Although we consider unfounded Bulgakov's idea that the difference between sexes is based on the distinction between the Persons of the Holy Trinity (Bulgakov sees the male element as the hypostatization of truth in the Logos, and the female element as the hypostatization of beauty in the Holy Spirit), these two modalities of the human person represent, certainly have a deep spiritual basis in, and are connected to human nature; they are connected to the human person's dual unity, to the fact that the human person is whole only in two, specifically in two distinct principles, man and woman. Therefore, far from disappearing, this distinction is called to "the fullest manifestation, enlightenment, and perpetuation."[44] Both the male image and the female image will be raised to virginity, as the state in which God conceived the human person and from which he has fallen through sin.

> Virginity is freedom from sex, but male and female natures are preserved. It is impossible to allow that the children of the resurrection in their new immortal life should appear depersonalized, having ceased being their own selves, for resurrection

> is the restoration and perpetuation precisely of the primordial condition of humankind, liberated from the perversion of sin and the depletion of existence in the flesh. But the male and female principles are not reduced to a corporeal, sexual distinction, no, they are extended to the spiritual essence of humankind too and qualify it . . . Thus, it is impossible to regard the state of resurrection as a complete abolition of the male and female principle with its replacement by some sort of middle, undifferentiated condition, which would be tantamount to the impoverishment and simplification of human nature . . . [The resurrected body] is freed from what is bound with the life of bodily sex (as some of the fathers, e.g., St. Gregory of Nyssa, point out). But humankind exists both spiritually and bodily in two forms . . . This bi-unity in the human is expressed in the twoness of its essence, which is coupled into oneness. In earthly life this coupling is connected with the life of sex and childbirth . . . But if in the future age humankind is freed from sex, and reproduction becomes superfluous, is anything left of the mutual relations of the male and female nature? . . . Without a doubt it remains and this possibility is *love*, which binds together and reciprocally completes male and female nature after the image of Christ and the Church . . . One should not allow that in that life there could be forfeited anything of the relations of love between people already existing in this life; everything worthy of perpetuation is shown in all its force. New and endlessly developing possibilities of love and friendship are revealed, however, for only in the age of the resurrection will the human race exist in all its wholeness, not in generations that give place to one another; the whole human race will become one family and concord in God.[45]

Human persons will be like the angels in that they will love each other with a totally spiritual love, one that is personal and freed from the forces of nature and the passion of sex. But the full variety of persons will be preserved, just as the angels represent different spiritual modalities as persons. Bulgakov gives the unity and variety among angels as a model for the future unity and variety of human persons; he says, "The assembly of angels, having love for God and life in God as its foundation, is fastened together by their mutual personal love, which is nourished by reciprocal loving contemplation of individuals, of the personal properties of each angel . . . The heavenly world is created by love; it is a hymn of love and its flame. In the diversity of this love no ontological property, no ray of the pleroma of the angelic world is left unnoticed and unloved—all-seeing love gazes on and loves everything."[46]

All of this, however, refers to the bodies that are raised in glory. The state of sinners' resurrected bodies will be different. They will also be incorruptible, but at the same time they will be able to feel torments. They too will have an incorruptibility, but in a negative sense, as eternally living flesh.

Some theologians, especially Catholic ones, believe that sinners' bodies will not be raised into the air, but "are left on earth as a sign of contempt."[47] But St. John of Damascus says that the everlasting fire "will not be a material fire such as we are accustomed to."[48] It is difficult to allow that God uses His creation as a means for eternal torment. We previously attempted to show that the "world" in which sinners live is a hallucinatory weakening of the world, its covering in the totally individualistic darkness in which they immersed themselves.

Certainly, this hallucinatory disfiguration of the world must have a certain connection with its material reality, while sinners' bodies themselves, as resurrected bodies that have a material consistency, cannot lack an external, material basis.

On the other hand, these bodies, being incorruptible and not needing to consume anything, must have a kind of material fineness. But at the same time this spirituality must be a darkened one and must also express in a very accentuated way the evil and the sadness in their souls, which are isolated and tormented by demons. At the same time, their lack of communicativeness gives them a certain rigidity, because they do not have the desire to know the creation extended into them or rooted in God's infinite depths. In these conditions the material sphere in which they are placed could be constituted almost entirely of their bodily matter, spiritualized in a tenebrous manner, in some sort of relationship between the bearers of these bodies and the demons; together they would constitute a kind of world of shadows, real in one way and unreal in another, with dimensions that are more hallucinatory than real. This may cause the inhabitants of this world to not see the world of light and of supreme reality in which the righteous dwell, because the inhabitants of the former world would consider the world of light unreal and would forget those who were in it. Likewise, the righteous may not see the subjectively hallucinatory and somewhat unreal world of the sinners, nor the sinners themselves.

St. Symeon the New Theologian says, "God is infinite and incomprehensible; tell me, if you can, what place will there be for those who fall outside His Kingdom?"[49]

They will know of the world only from memory, but memory will no longer render it as it was. They will know of a world distorted and defiled according to their passions. They will see only a world thrown into the shadows by their passions and hallucinations. They will not see each other face to face as they are in reality, but they will only see the masks of others, masks that in part the others have adopted and that in part they project; they will know only that the others too are suffering in the same darkness as they are, around them, or better said in other hallucinations of the world and in torments corresponding to their particular passions. Each will have his own individual "world." There will not be a unitary world to sustain unity among them. They will see each other more like shadows that are empty of the real world's content, that do not progress in its knowledge or in their mutual spiritual enrichment in contact with the real world. In Holy Scripture the believer often asks God to not send him away from His face or countenance, His maximum and infinite existence, in connection with which the entire world remains and is illumined; or he asks that he might share in the light of His face, for in this light he will share in everything (Ps 4:6; 27:9; 31:16; 36:9–10; 44:3; 105:4; Isa 2:5; 60:19; Mic 7:8; Hab 3:4; John 8:12; Col 1:12; 1 Thess 5:5; 1 Tim 6:16; Rev 21:24; 22:5; etc.).

That is why it cannot be said of the bodies of sinners that they too will form a unity, that the sinners will also be a "universal body." Among the evil ones, because they are egoists, there is not the same unity as among those who love each other. Or at least they will not be united internally among themselves, but will be forced together: each will feel the effluvia of the others' evilness, which on one hand make them relate to one another, and on the other hand keep them facing away from each other. Only through love are persons really united, and only in love are they in a real relationship with the world. And existential plenitude is realized and takes place only in love. "In its secrecy the person has a need to see, to know, and to love itself in the spiritual mirror of the other . . . It is an axiom of love that *I* is not single, not solitary, but paired, syzygic-correlative, that it knows and possesses itself only in connection with its double, in a duality . . . The I finds a place for itself in being where it is confirmed and where it is convinced once and for all, only in syzygy, but holding on to the hand of the other. Through this metaphysical hand-shake it comes out of the gloom of half-being; it discovers its own power and reality in the world."[50]

A mystery that we certainly do not understood is that on one hand the bodies of sinners are affected by Christ's Resurrection and they too are resurrected, and on the other hand they do not partake of the glory of the Lord's resurrected body. The Russian theologian Nesmelov attempted to explain the resurrection of sinners' bodies by the fact that the Lord, in resurrecting the human nature that He assumed, made the general human nature eternal, given that His resurrected nature did not constitute a separate human hypostasis. When He rose again, the resurrection became "a law" for all, just as when Adam died, death became a law for all. "If Christ was only an ideally holy man, the Son of God according to grace, not according to essence, His resurrection would have had an individual character as a "miracle," which—similar to Elijah being taken up to heaven—would have been only a testimony to God's mercifulness exclusively toward Him, but in no way would it have influenced the destiny of all humankind."[51] "Clearly, then, it was not human nature's dignity that would have served as a correct basis for the miracle of the resurrection, but the personal moral dignity of those righteous ones upon whom the miracle would have been performed."[52]

Based on the unity of Christ's divine hypostasis, "human nature acquired in Him a dignity which it does not have and cannot have by itself; it has become the God's own body."[53] And by resurrecting it, He made it "His eternal body."[54] He assumed human nature not in an individualistic sense, but "in a general human [sense, and] it is entirely identical with the nature of its bearers. Thus, by accepting it, through the act of His resurrection, into eternal union with Himself, *eo ipso* He makes all humankind, in the plenitude of its composition, an eternal partner . . . After Christ's resurrection from the dead, each human person is the bearer of the eternal nature, not because he himself is the body of Christ, but because every human person bears the same nature that Christ rendered eternal; so, according to his human nature, as being of one essence with Christ, each human person is inevitably a member of the eternal body of Christ."[55] "In light of this teaching, it is clear to us that sinners will be raised not to receive the recompense for their sins, but vice versa, they will receive the recompense for their sinful life, because they will inevitably be raised from the dead. And their resurrection is inevitable because—regardless of their sinful life—by virtue of Christ's resurrection they are still beneficiaries of the eternal nature and they necessarily belong to eternity."[56] "Thus Christ is humankind's beginning, cause, and source of 'eternal life' in the same way as our forefather Adam is with respect to the natural, temporal life. What was once the act of man's creation, that is, the principle and cause of the common human existence, that is what Christ's resurrection has become, that is, the principle and the cause of the heavenly 'eternal life,' in other existential conditions."[57]

It can be said, therefore, that all will rise again because their human nature is united with Christ's nature. But not all will rise again into happiness, since happiness is a matter of each one's personal decision to be in communion with Christ. *Christ does not have in Himself all human persons, but all human nature.* If He had in Himself all human persons, He would be a plurality of persons and a plurality of liberties. But then there would no longer be human persons outside Christ. In the unity of our nature with Christ, we have a basis for effortless communion with Him, but we do not have our salvation decided without us. Even sinners rise again based on the unity of their nature with Christ, so that they may be able to eternally contemplate that they had the potential to be saved but did not use it; using their freedom, they refused the communion whose basis was given to them.

St. Cyril of Alexandria says the same thing: "The reason (λόγος) of the resurrection passes to all on account of the Resurrection of the Savior, who raises all human nature with Himself, but this will not be of any benefit to those who love sin. For they will be carried to hell and will receive the resurrection only to be punished. But it will be of much benefit to those who lived a pure life, for they will receive the resurrection so as to share in the good things beyond reason."[58] Similarly, Christ's own existential character is extended to all, good and bad, but it is not the same for all. For those who believe in Him, the Resurrection is the source of true kinship and everything that comes from it. Christ has all of us because He became man like all of us; all of us are His. It is in this that the reason for the resurrection of all perhaps lies. Nothing human can disappear eternally, for nothing that belongs to

Christ can disappear. But the partaking of happiness depends on the personal will of each. For "all will be His own (οἰκεῖοι), since they are men like Him; the character of being His own is common to all, both those who know Him and those who do not. For He became man not by giving Himself to some and not to others, but He had mercy on the entire fallen nature."[59] Therefore, what depends on Him—the resurrection—He grants to all; happiness, however, depends on each person's voluntary adherence to Him. The incorruptibility of all matter will depend on the power of God's eternal act of preserving it.

CHAPTER 9

UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT

Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers place universal judgment in close relationship with the end or the renewal of the world, as well as with the resurrection of the dead, both of which are simultaneous with the coming of Christ or are caused by it. Some of the Fathers see the judgment precisely in the fact that those who shaped themselves according to Christ's image will pass through the resurrection into full communion with Him, while the others will pass into "eternal exile." The former "will eternally behold the face of Christ; the latter will eternally behold the face of the devil."[1]

On the other hand, Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers speak of a judgment that Christ will render immediately after His Second Coming and after the resurrection of the dead, in an atmosphere of great solemnity.

According to some texts from the Old Testament (Dan 7:9–10) and from the New Testament (Matt 25:31–46; Rev 20:11), Christ will render judgment while sitting on a throne. According to the book of Revelation, this judgment itself will cause the end of the world. Daniel speaks of thrones, and on one of these thrones sits the Ancient of Days. "One like the Son of Man" comes before the Ancient of Days and receives dominion from Him (Dan 7:9–14).

St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Symeon Metaphrastes also speak of thrones and of angels who surround Christ the Judge.

There is no contradiction between (1) the affirmation that Christ's very appearance at the end of the world means a judgment that separates those who will be sent to happiness from those who will be sent to eternal torments, and (2) the description of this judgment as a distinct solemn act of supreme authority. The eternal light of which the good will partake is a look and a call that Christ addresses to every one of them, just as the darkness in which the others are left is a turning of His face from every one of them, or His face dismissing them of their own accord. At the same time he who experiences Christ's face turning toward him as an eternal light, eternally inexhaustible, sees himself in everything that Christ finds good in him, but he also sees the others who are enveloped in the same light. Likewise, each of those immersed in darkness sees himself in all the ugliness that he imprinted upon his being, and he also sees all those who, like him, are left in the same situation. That is why this experience of solidarity—whether in the light to which some are sent based on the good deeds that they did to others, or in the darkness to which others are sent based on the evil deeds that they did to others—is experienced as a solidary judgment on them for the result they attained in the development or disfiguration of their humanity during their lives.

These are the books that will be opened (Dan 7:10; Rev 20:12), which are the very lives of human persons; or "the Book of Life" (Rev 20:12), which is the treasure of life that the righteous gained for themselves in Christ.

On the other hand, the feeling of all that their destiny has been sealed for eternity, without any possibility of change, is interpreted as their experience of the supreme authority of Him who judges from a very high imperial throne. His throne is not only big, but also "white," because it is the throne from which judgments that are unstained by any interest, flattery, or bribe are decided. The overwhelming authority that radiates from the face of the Judge is so great that "from His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them" (Rev 20:11). Earth and sky are purely and simply seen no more, on account of the authority radiating from this face, which keeps all humans focusing their gaze upon it. It seems that there is nothing else except this face, or everything is included in it. Only this face, only this Person, is seen by all, because they feel that it is this Person upon whom their eternal existence depends. And the evil ones no longer see anything, not even this face, but everything is an unfathomable and dark emptiness before them. That is why St. Maximus the Confessor says that the whole creation will turn away from the evil ones at the same time Christ's face does, and before them nothing exists any longer except the darkness of total emptiness, "the outer darkness," "the gaping and immense abyss."[2]

Daniel speaks of "a stream of fire [that] issued and came forth from before Him" (Dan 7:10). Symeon Metaphrastes says that this fiery stream will consume all the lawbreakers, as the Psalmist also says: "Fire goes before Him, and burns up His adversaries round about. His lightnings lighten the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim His righteousness; and all the peoples behold His glory" (Ps 97:3–6). Everything will be overwhelmed by the glory of Christ's face. But this glory will appear to those who did not know Him as a consuming fire, and to the righteous as a light of love that covers all.

Daniel also speaks of a thousand thousands of angels who serve Him (Dan 7:10; cf. Matt 25:31). By this the Judge's overwhelming authority is further emphasized, as is the infinite interest with which the entire creation awaits this act that in a supreme way will reveal its future and the meaning of its unfolding in time, as well as the immeasurable fear of those who await Christ's decision regarding their eternal existence. The "outer darkness" (Matt 25:30) could be the evil, adversarial spirits that await this judgment, for they too have a great interest in knowing what damnation they will be sent to and how many human persons will accompany them in this damnation. They feel God's presence not as glory, but as fire, and the magnitude of darkness that they have produced does not allow those destined to darkness to see Christ's glory. Thus the evil angels' fire and darkness are added to the fire of the pains that are caused by Christ's face turning away from those who on earth refused the light of communion; their fire and darkness are also added to the hallucinatory darkness that the evil ones shed upon the world. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "'A stream of fire issued before Him' [Dan 7:10], when Tartarus and the gaping and immense abyss, the outer darkness, and the sleepless worm make their appearance. Fear was suspended over those who awaited the conclusion; the angels of wrath, of the fire of punishment, will be there, having burning eyes and projecting flames, ready to punish every transgression. And every creature in heaven or earth, both the angels and the powers above the angels as well as men, stand trembling as they await the divine will. Then, before all, all our deeds will be read, and those that are hidden will be revealed, so that we will thus come to know the sins of the others, as each [will come to know] his own by reading the book of his conscience."[3]

The criterion of judgment will be whether one practiced or did not practice love toward his fellow men, a love that is firmly rooted in the ability to see God through man, in the human person being rooted in God and being able to understand his neighbor as the image of God. In this way the one who loves is actualized as an image of God, as a true man. For by loving others, he cooperates with God and is united with God in His work, and thereby he himself is fully actualized as a man. Love's different forms or unshakable levels are the virtues. Through them the human person gives God a human image in himself, that is, he gives a human image to Christ, who more than anyone else has given God a human image in Himself. That is why God the Father gives the judgment of men over to Christ (Dan 7:14), so that Christ Himself may determine to what measure those who are examined have His image imprinted in them, have become like Him, and have thus actualized the true man in themselves, something that could not be done if they had not lived in communion with Him.

According to St. Maximus the Confessor, anyone who loved bad things, who did not want to see God's glory in the world, will immerse himself in darkness. Those who loved the vanity of pride, instead of the humility that knows the higher and truly existent things, have fallen into the abyss of emptiness. Those who laughed at everything serious will weep. Those who hated their brothers, envied them, cheated them, slandered them, lied to them, prevented them from partaking of that which is needful for life, and led them away from the path leading to true life will be devoured in the depths of their souls by the sleepless worm; those who did not have the sincerity of love within themselves have distorted their hearts.[4]

Christ will find that those who loved other persons as they loved Him, or those who loved Him in other persons, are in His image, for this has given them the power to love. He will examine us in order to see the degree to which we worked with Him, to which we identified ourselves with Him, just as He identified Himself with human beings. In particular Christ has assured us that He identifies with the oppressed, and He will search out whether we loved Him in them. He declared that there will be eternal happiness—which consists of perfect communion with God and one's neighbors, and thus in partaking of the spiritual, infinite plenitude of wholeness—for him who left here inclined toward this communion, for him who saw that God's infinite depths were reflected in the infinite value of his most oppressed neighbor and kept this neighbor connected to God. A person who sees his oppressed neighbor in this way has further honored this image, this reflection of God, and seeks to free him from the shortcomings and humiliations cast upon him by his neighbors' sinful indifference, by the image of this world that bears the consequences of sin, by the sinful ignorance and weakness that are proper to this world. He who truly loves man sees in him, to some extent, the one who transcends man; he sees God, in whom the human being has his foundation and who is the source of knowledge and love. He who loves the one who is despised by all truly loves himself as a human being; the human person's hidden, supreme value has been revealed to him. He who pays attention only to those in good positions respects them not because they are humans, but because of a certain personal interest; he does not love man as man, in contrast with him who turns with love to his neighbors who are oppressed and in difficult positions. On the other hand, under the rays of attention from his neighbor, the oppressed person reveals in a distinct way his profound humanity, and therefore God in himself. The others are even further puffed up by the honor that is given to them. This honor covers up their authentic humanity and God in them, and thus communion is not realized. And so in the person who audibly or inaudibly cries in an agonized way for help, or whose eyes have been subdued by suffering, it is Christ Himself who cries or looks more piercingly into the hearts of his neighbors. This is because suffering as a more acute human sensibility is a more adequate medium for the revelation of God, who also seeks to awaken human sensibility. Thus those who suffer and are heavy laden represent for us a much more efficient help that Christ gives us so that we may enter into a relationship with Him, so that we may be awakened.

Therefore, especially when we turn with love toward those in distress, we are able to see God much more clearly; we have a foretaste of seeing the heavenly Kingdom's divine depths through our neighbors. For him who through the labors of works of love has opened his eyes in the slightest degree toward the spiritual infinitude that especially opens up before him in communion with his distressed neighbor, the gate toward the infinite spiritual universe will open wide at the last judgment.

He who loves those in distress loves the Lord, who humbled Himself as the least among men; he does the Lord's work, or the Lord's work is done through him. God became man only so that He Himself could be loved as a man and so that He might show by His example how the human person should love his neighbors. He wants us to love Him as a man; He requests our love and shows us how to love. He enters into a relationship of love with us and strengthens the relationships of love among us; He allows Himself to also be addressed as a concrete subject of love who is both divine and human. He strengthens our love by attracting us to love through the face of him who is suffering, and He, as the one who loves the suffering person in an exemplary way, gives us the power to love. He facilitates our love, awakening the mercy that He implanted in a natural way in our being. "Through Christ and in Christ we receive the ability to love our neighbor: 'I give you a *new* commandment, that you love one another' . . . But the *new* command about love is about love *in a new way*, in keeping with a co-humanity not in Adam (to which the Old Testament commandment referred) but in Christ, and Christ's questions at the Last Judgment will be evidence of this, where His pan-humanity will be revealed."[5]

The divine "I" that is manifested through the humanity of Christ, who also became the human "I," has a breadth, a divine complexity, an infinite depth, through which He manifests His character as the model and foundation for all human hypostases, and as the source of their power for love, while He still manifests Himself humanly. Each one of us will love Christ fully only when we love every human person. For by not loving a human person, you do not love a ray of Christ, of the divine hypostasis who appeared in a human form, or rather in a panhuman one. That is why Christ's humanity does not belong to a human hypostasis, but to the divine hypostasis; thus it is not the means by which a certain particular "I" manifests itself, and therefore particular itself, but the means by which the divine "I," the original model and the creator and sustainer of all human "I"s, manifests itself. It is, therefore, a humanity capable of representing and manifesting human universality. It is a humanity that asks to be loved in all persons and gives us the power to love all of them.

Right now, perhaps we do not see Christ in our neighbor, or we do not see our neighbor in Christ. For the time being, we know this perhaps only through faith. At that time we will see the image of every human person in Christ; in every human person we will see a ray of Christ's face. Then we will see that by not loving a human person, we did not love Christ in that person and did not let Christ love him in us. We have an illustration of this in the relation between the image of a parent and that of his children. The parent's image encompasses the images of all his children, and the image of every child represents a ray from the image of the parent, or the entire specificity of the parent's face in that ray. He who does not love a child's image does not love the child's parent entirely and does not follow the parent's example. Christ considers that all the loving or nonloving works directed toward human persons relate back to Him, as we relate back to ourselves all honor or dishonor that is addressed to our mother, our brothers, or our children.

St. Gregory Palamas observes that the Lord did not say that those who steal goods meant for the poor will be placed on the left side and sent to Gehenna, but only that those who did not give of their own to the needy will be sent there. St. Gregory then says that the latter will not even present themselves for judgment, but they will be condemned from the beginning, because in this life they did not present themselves before God either: "The plunderers and the unjust will not be raised to be presented for judgment to receive a greater condemnation and sentence, because neither did they ever come before God with their whole soul."[6]

The Holy Fathers are very insistent that all the deeds and thoughts of everyone will be completely revealed at that judgment, before all persons and angels. That day will be the day when the truth about everything will be completely revealed before everyone. Then there will be no ambiguity in the souls of men, not only concerning their own state, but the state of all men. Particularly in regard to the latter, light will shed on the soul, for each person's own state will be known in great measure at the particular judgment. Evil will be fully exposed, and the good will be uncovered. All ambiguity will cease. The reign of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will have ended its ambiguous dominion over the world; it will no longer overshadow the human soul and the divine plan for the history of the world, because no one will be nourished by it any longer, its lie having been exposed. Every human person will know the consequences that his deeds will yield after his death, and he will be judged for these consequences; also, every person will know the antecedents of his good and evil deeds in the behavior of his predecessors and will rightly know the deeds and the value of all persons. Thus the last judgment will also be a supreme revelation of the divine plan in history, of the contribution that human persons brought to its realization or obstruction.

This will show that the human person also had a responsibility for creation's unfolding after him in time, not only for his immediate neighbors. Each person's good or bad example had repercussions upon the whole world. But this will show that each person also had an obligation to be directly engaged, according to his potential, in the world's historical life; he was obliged to sustain, for example, the saving faith or the ideas of justice and of brotherhood among human beings. On the other hand, the universal judgment will remove not only all the individual masks of human beings (those of grandiloquence, hypocrisy, and so forth), but also many masks under which history as a whole, or various epochs and events in its course, was concealed.

> If the divine plan, which is order itself, has been obscured over time, it must be that God has his time to make it shine . . . This appearance of the divine plan, suddenly emerging from the darkness so as to reveal itself to every intelligent gaze, this will be the judgment itself . . . The last judgment, viewed from above and in the great light of reason and of faith, is exactly this: the plan of divine Wisdom suddenly being revealed before the universal assembly of all created beings . . . [it is] the dazzling revelation, the searing explosion of the entire order and of all harmonies of the divine plan, being revealed in a triumphant clarity before the intellects called forth in order to look upon it and to find, even while they are looking, their absolution or their condemnation, their triumph or their defeat, their humiliation or their glorification.[7]

Sinners will be fully exposed in their shameful state. As long as we are on earth, we can cover ourselves to a greater or lesser degree, because our neighbor still has doubts about our character, or because if one person knows one of our evil deeds, the others do not know it. At that time all of us will know the others' deeds.

But all who have done good will fully rejoice in the gratitude with which they will be met by all those upon whom the good they did had repercussions. All the good and all the evil done in the world will not appear as abstract entities, but as imprinted in the state of human beings and in the gratitude or the reproach with which they will greet each other. For we will see and recognize all persons at the last judgment; we will see the consequences of our actions in them, as well as their response of gratitude or reproach for our actions. We will see and recognize even those on whom our good or evil actions had indirect repercussions. "Let no one think that anyone will not recognize anyone at that dreadful judgment and gathering. Everyone will recognize his neighbor not by his bodily form, but by the piercing look of his soul."[8] And St. John Chrysostom says, "In that place we will know not only our acquaintances, but also those who never came into our view."[9] St. Basil the Great also says, "Standing around you, those whom you treated unjustly will cry out to you. For wherever you turn your eyes, you will see the images of your evil deeds. Here the orphans; there the widows; and over there the poor you oppressed, the servants you cast aside, and the neighbors you upset."[10]

From all sides everyone will bring to light and to the surface of the evildoer's conscience all the evils he has done, all his refusals of brotherly dialogue, because of which he will henceforth be left in a frightening and definitive loneliness. After this he will be totally and definitively abandoned by all, and eternal silence and loneliness will envelop him like an ocean; after this he will forever leave behind all dialogue, all communication. He will no longer be able to call upon anyone, nor will he have any occasion to respond to anyone. He will be immersed in the outer darkness. His incapacity for dialogue will make prayer for him useless.

As long as he lived among men who did not know him, he could manage a dialogue with someone, for his hardened insincerity was not known by all. Now he falls into the solitude of being abandoned and forgotten by all, into the opposite extreme of sobornicity. This is what hell consists of. While human beings are on earth, there is a market where they can procure salvation for themselves: in view of being saved, one gives and another receives prayers and good works. Therefore through appeals and responses a vast and plural dialogue is carried on among human beings and between them and God; it is not only human beings who give and receive, but also God, and therefore all who give and receive benefit a hundredfold. "When the market day is over, there is no more trading for goods. For then where are the poor? Where are the liturgists and the psalmody? Where are the good works? Before the hour of death, we can help each other, and we can offer manifestations of brotherly love to God, the lover of mankind. For through deeds performed on their behalf, He receives the completion of what is lacking in those who left unexpectedly and unprepared, and He considers them as their deeds."[11]

While we are on earth, the world is given to us in a phase of moral and spiritual construction, so that we may all participate in this construction. But once it ends no one can participate in this construction any longer, for everything is finished. We no longer have irregularities to smooth out, injustices to undo, or brotherhood to realize. Over there we will rejoice in the happiness of perfect communion.

Even for angels, that judgment will mean a revelation of the divine plan regarding the world, a revelation that is awaited with fear and trembling.[12] And since this knowledge of all persons by each person, and of each person by all persons, also means an appraisal of all, it implies that each person participates in the judgment of all. Because the righteous will be acquitted at this judgment, they will not be judged, properly speaking—that is, they will not be condemned—but together with God they will condemn all who deserve punishment, and will commend with praise those who have done good. Perhaps this is how the apostles' participation in the judgment should be understood (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30), a participation that must be extended to all the righteous (1 Cor 6:2).[13]

We cannot know if the angels await that judgment with fear for a reason other than that God's plan for salvation will be revealed. Bulgakov states that they too will be judged according to how they fulfilled their task to persuade the human beings under their care to do good and to avoid evil; on the basis of 1 Corinthians 6:3, he affirms that they will be judged even by human beings.[14] But St. Maximus the Confessor, who speaks of this fear of the angels, mentions only the judgment of human beings.[15] The angels' fear is perhaps motivated by the magnitude of this act, as well as by the fact that many of them will definitively lose those given to their care. Before the judgment the angels may know the hidden things of the human beings entrusted to their care better than the human beings do, and the angels may keep these things better in their memory.[16] But all of them do not know the thoughts and deeds of all men, but only those of some men. That is why the angels too await with trembling the great revelation regarding creation and its consequences.[17] For that revelation will not only have a theoretical character (it will not only show how God wished creation to be and what human beings have done with it), but it will entail the appearance of new images of reality. Through His Second Coming and through His judgment, Christ enters into a new relationship with creation; He reveals His greatness that He did not fully reveal before. This will be a new revelation of the glory to which He raised humanity, and at the same time a more complete manifestation of God through humanity.

The fact that Christ judges the world as a man is a new honor in which man is shown forth, but also a new deification of man. What man was supposed to become will be made manifest in his countenance of supreme honor; and the contradiction in which human beings placed themselves, or the distance they remained from the goal that God wanted them to reach, will be made manifest in the fact that He must judge them. In Christ the Judge, human beings will see His humanity in a new light, but they will also discover God in a new way. And just as through the Incarnation God revealed Himself in a new way to the angels too when He drew near to creatures and left His transcendence, which was inaccessible in a certain sense, so will God reveal Himself to the angels in a new way through the Lord's coming in glory and His manifestation as Judge; and, at the same time, He will accentuate humanity's greatness in a new way before them.

CHAPTER 10

THE LIFE ETERNAL

God's supreme closeness to human persons—and therefore God's supreme revelation in Jesus Christ, which is also the supreme glory of Jesus Christ's humanity and the glory of all the righteous—is seen in the state to which we are raised through judgment. The angels also await this with fear and trembling.

But this glory will be revealed more and more unto the ages of ages. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "And therefore whoever, by the exercise of wisdom, enables God to become incarnate within him or her and, in fulfillment of this mystery, undergoes deification by grace, is truly blessed, because that deification has no end. For he who bestows his grace on those who are worthy of it is himself infinite in essence, and has the infinite and utterly limitless power to deify humanity."[1]

St. Gregory of Nyssa gave the name "*epektasis*" to the unceasing tension of souls that move from union with God to greater union:

> A spiritual nature has two aspects. First, the uncreated or Creator of beings always remains what it is. And always being itself, it does not admit an increase or diminution with respect to the good. The second aspect comes into existence through creation and always looks back to its first cause. By participation in the transcendent, it continually remains stable in the good; in a certain sense, it is always being created while ever changing for the better in its growth in perfection. Neither is it limited, nor can it be circumscribed in its growth towards the

> good; however, its present state of goodness, even if especially great and perfect, is only the beginning of a more transcendent, better stage. The Apostle's words are thus verified: the stretching out [or "tension," *epektasis*] to what lies before is related to forgetfulness of earlier accomplishments [Phil 3:13]. The good which is superior to the one already attained holds the attention of those participating in it while not allowing them to look at the past; by enjoying what is more worthy, their memory of inferior things is blotted out.[2]

The good that the human being currently partakes of enlarges him; it enables him to participate in even better things and awakens in him a new thirst. On one hand this comes from the fact that, as a spirit, the human person cannot be limited, as God cannot be limited. "But the essential difference is that God is infinite in action, while the soul is infinite in becoming."[3] On the other hand *epektasis* is explained by the fact that God is by nature inaccessible; He remains always transcendent, and He always stimulates the tension toward Himself. Regardless of how much the created being advances toward Him, it can never contain His essence, because it can never become infinite in action.[4]

There is a big difference between the *élan* from here toward the divine plenitude and the *élan* in the life to come. Here the *élan* is hindered; it is constrained by physical necessities, by the mind's inability to directly know heavenly realities. "The eighth day" will give full freedom back to this *élan*, and even this full freedom will be an unveiled experience of God, who is completely free and the source of freedom. "It abolishes all temporal determinations and limitations, and prevents the vital energy from being dispersed and wasted in birth and death, since it is eternal life, the eternal present illuminated by an eternal light."[5] We are still slaves because we still sin, or because we have not yet freed ourselves from the consequences of sin. We must bear what belonged to the first Adam before we reach the point of fully receiving the freedom of the second Adam, who, because He is sinless, is free, and that is also why He was not subjected to death, but He willingly accepted it for us, opening for us as well the path to freedom and toward the complete co-partaking of Him.[6] The full freedom that we will attain will be the unrestricted openness of our subject toward the infinite. And in this unrestricted openness toward the infinite, which is opposed to the experience of evil, the very nature of freedom is revealed.

The freedom after the end of time is man's return to the freedom of the divine image in him; at that time man, unrestrained by the consequences of sin, will be definitively realized. "[This freedom] is characterized by the absence of sexuality, by immortality, incorruptibility, spiritual freedom, freedom of conscience, [and] lastly, intellectual freedom."[7] The consequences of sin "created the division and antagonism between soul and body, between past and future, between the senses and the intellect."[8] The *élan* of freedom, the *élan* of the spirit toward endless growth (which is the same as the divine eros unconquered by sin), finds its strength in the life to come through contact with the infinite.

According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, this liberation has three aspects:

1. The first aspect of liberation is the elimination of the division between body and soul. "The purified soul penetrates a body that has become transparent, light, and free,"[9] not subjected to necessities and innocent passions. This intimacy between soul and body transfigures the human being's desire, tension, and energy. Through the complete absence of passions (*apatheia*), the human person becomes equal to the angels. "Here *apatheia* does not consist, like in Plato and Plotinus, in a renunciation of the body, but in the sublimation of the *pathos* of a body that finds its original significance as an instrument of the spirit."[10] "The Word cannot wish for the life of the righteous to be torn apart by a dualism. But when the wall of evil is knocked down, the soul and the body will be fused in a superior harmony. If the Divine is simple, without composition or form, man also must, through this pacification, return to the good, become simple and pure again in order to truly become one. Thus the hidden interior completely covers the visible exterior, and the visible exterior, the hidden interior."[11] This physical transparence will, however, coincide with a moral purity and with complete sincerity toward one's neighbors. In this transparence man will know himself as he is, and he will manifest himself to others as he is. Illusion and hypocrisy will disappear.[12]

2. "The second aspect of this liberation is the unification of the past and the future, that is to say of memory and hope. The temporal conscience . . . was always torn apart by desire on one hand, and regret, remorse, on the other hand."[13] There the conscience that is liberated

from this continual lack of fulfillment, having been "raised by desire, . . . no longer gives any place in itself either to hope or to memory. It has what it was hoping for, and it drives out memory from its mind in its occupation with the enjoyment of good things."[14] "So if the soul becomes clean of all evil, it will exist entirely in beauty . . . There will no longer be a need for the impulse of desire to lead us toward the beautiful. He who passes his life in darkness will desire the light; if he should come into the light, attainment will replace desire."[15] Once the soul has become "an accurate image of God," it "has no desire because it has no lack of any good thing . . . the soul which has no insufficiency also casts out from itself the desiring impulse and disposition, which occurs only when something wanted is not present."[16] Earthly desire is transformed into "the impulse and operation of love. It conforms itself to that which is always being grasped and found."[17] "This unification of the dynamism of the "I" in an eternal present where past and future, memory and hope, are fused and indentified with each other is the eternal presence 'in God who possesses that which he wills, and wills that which he possesses.'"[18]

3. Through this double unification, the soul attains a profound unity between the senses and the intellect. Knowledge and love become one. To feel and to know God will be one and the same thing.

The unification of the entirety of human dynamism in ever-increasing love reveals to us that the spirit's most profound aspect is freedom. For freedom is the pure spirit's infinite ability, always renewed, to continually overcome its finitude. Freedom is the continual ascent toward God, the human spirit's infinite and unconditioned origin. Freedom is, on one hand, our nature's mode of realization; on the other hand it is, in its essence, an experience of the infinite. This is because "human nature is at once finite and infinite."[19] It is the finite opened to the infinite. It is finite when it remains unmoved in itself, and it is infinite when it moves toward God through its freedom. "The nature of angels and of souls knows no limit and nothing stops it from progressing to the infinite."[20] It follows from this that nature is not something completed, but, due to freedom, something in the course of becoming, with an endless dynamic capacity. "Creation is not in the good except through a participation in the better; it did not only begin to exist once, but in every moment one sees it in its beginning, because of its perpetual growth in the good."[21] Consequently, human nature and its likeness with God are one, because both represent the *élan* toward the infinite. "The one limit of virtue is the absence of a limit. How then would one arrive at the sought-for boundary when he can find no boundary?"[22]

Even the fact that human nature is made in order to participate in God and that God has no end shows that, through desire or in its growth, it has no end. "Because the supreme good is infinite by its nature, communion with it must itself necessarily be infinite, that is to say capable of eternally expanding."[23] Thus human nature must truly be defined as infinite tension. "For the perfection of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in goodness."[24] At the same time it experiences both the infinite and the finite, that is, at every moment "there is an infinite distance between our capacity for the infinite and our realized existence."[25] We are always conscious of both of these. For "the distance covered [by us], no matter how big, remains minimal in comparison with the infinite."[26] Human nature eternally travels the distance between the finite and the infinite, and it is urged on, by desire and a sort of experience of its current finitude, toward the highest infinity, without comprehending this infinity's essence itself. What it has obtained is never the whole, but it is the beginning of the whole, "for the beginning of even greater blessings is never limited."[27]

"The condition of this experience of the infinite is the negation of all fusion between the divine nature, infinite in action, and the human nature, infinite in movement."[28] But at the same time it is the experience of nonseparation, of human nature's participation in the divine nature, of a union without confusion. If man's essence is to be infinite in becoming, its fusion with the infinite would destroy this essence, which is not plenitude in itself or infinite in action but rather participation in the divine plenitude, which is distinct from it.

In his quality as God's creature, man is distinct from the Creator but also united with Him, since he is the created image of the uncreated mode and since he was made changeable so that he may grow freely in God, whereas God is changeless.[29]

Human nature must realize itself through its free movement, following its authentic direction. This free movement toward its source, sought after as its final goal, gives it its true significance. In this movement creation continually overcomes its finitude, that is, the limit it has already reached.

But if the soul never obtains plenitude and continually moves toward it, does not this make happiness impossible? If the "I" never succeeds in being realized and is continually on the path of realization, does not this produce despair?

St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms, on the contrary, that this endless ascent itself, which is a continual creation, drives away monotony and despair. This endless ascent sustains a continual happiness, as opposed to the Origenist "satiety," which caused souls to leave the initial state of happiness because they were bored and thus could cause them to continually repeat this exit after having reached the state of happiness again.

St. Maximus the Confessor offers new specifications upon which to base the fact that the movement in the life to come will not imply any boredom. He says that in that life there will no longer be any "interval" (*diastasis*) between creation and Creator.[30] If the created being still moves toward the infinite in God, this movement is a "static movement."[31] It is at the same time a taste of the divine plenitude, but the experience of this plenitude—being an experience of the infinite—constantly sustains the will for a more complete comprehension of God. "Eternity, far from being a static uniformity, is always wonderfully renewed, an absolute beginning."[32] "The person rising never stands still. He moves from one beginning to another . . . towards the unbounded."[33] But, from a certain point of view, every beginning has everything within itself.

The life to come will be an endless Sunday, or paradise found and eschatology inaugurated, the moment of the dawn with its wonderful "suddenly" and the unfading light of the eighth day in which God will be all in all.

This shows that the end or eternal life is not a simple return to the beginning, a return to a point from which the temporal cycle can begin again, but rather an advancement in the same infinity. It does not mean an advancement in an endless linear time, for it happens at the end of time, but into an infinity that is continually tasted but that never satiates. If the life to come is movement, it is not a movement that transforms beings, St. Maximus the Confessor says, but a static movement or a mobile stability, a movement that eternally maintains the beings in that which they are and in Him who is, strengthening them and making them grow at the same time. For it is a direct movement around their unmoved first cause, of which they increasingly partake, and thus they cannot be corrupted. "As long as a nature is temporally in the world, it is subjected to the transformative movement on account of the world's limited stability and of corruption through alteration in the course of time. But once it has arrived in God, it will have, on account of the natural monad of Him whom it has reached, a stability in perpetual motion and an identical static movement that is eternally carried out around the One and Only. This is what Scripture calls the fixed and immediate dwelling of creation around its first cause."[34] Such a nature moves eternally without alteration; it moves in a stable way around God, not passing from His domain to somewhere else, because He has no boundary. The limitlessness of divinity and of its life, which becomes life for him who has arrived in God, assures his eternal stability precisely because he can and does move eternally around Him or in Him, rejoicing without limit in His boundless love. The infinite identity of God, around whom creation moves and of whom it partakes directly, eliminates time. For time is a movement that is circumscribed by a boundary, at which creation finds its end, within a world that is also a space, or a limited content.[35]

But creation's existence beyond time is not like the eternity of Him who is always the same. It is the movement around the eternal one and is not unmoved as He is; its "stability" is due to the "movement" around Him. Creation does not have eternity by itself, but only as participation in the eternal one. Therefore eternity penetrates creation's temporality, or stability penetrates its movement, as it advances in God. But creation's full existence beyond time comes at the end of its temporal existence, and it never reaches the level of God's infinite existence beyond time. In creation's eternity (αιωνιότης), time's outcome is preserved, and creation moves further toward God's eternity (αϊδιότης), which does not come from time and does not move toward something else.

This is seen not only in the fact that this existence is symbolized by Sunday (which concludes the temporal cycle of the week or of time, but also begins it), but also in the fact that it is symbolized by Pentecost. Pentecost is the beginning of eternal life in the Holy Spirit, fully given back to creation; the full end of time or of the week of weeks, since creation's new life began through the Resurrection of the Lord; and the end of five times ten, or of the entire life oriented, through the five senses, toward the visible world. "For He is . . . a Pentecost, as the beginning and end of created things and as the Reason in which all things are by nature comprised. For if Pentecost is after a sevenfold period of weeks, it is clear that Pentecost is ten times five. This means that the nature of created things—which is fivefold according to its senses and reason for being—after the natural passage of time and of the ages, will be in God, who is one in essence; and it will have no more limitations."[36] "The mystery of Pentecost is, therefore, the direct union with providence of that which [providence] foresaw, and thus the union of nature with the Word according through the work of providence, [a union] in which neither time nor becoming is manifested."[37]

Having passed from temporal movement into the eternity of union with God, who is boundless, creation will still continue to move within Him, but in a static movement that does not transform it, but that deifies it endlessly.

In his work the *Ambigua*, St. Maximus the Confessor masterfully defended the value of creation's temporal movement toward God against Origen, who considered movement as the fall of souls from the initial "plenitude." In contrast, St. Maximus considered movement to be a manifestation of creation's longing for God and of the attraction that God has exerted upon it.

In the same work St. Maximus also affirmed that creation's static movement in God in the life to come is not the result of its effort, but is God's inexhaustible gift, or its endless deification from God. And St. Maximus understood both these movements as the growth of the love between God and man, and also between human persons themselves in God. During the earthly life love is an expression of man's effort that develops a potential implanted in him by God; in the life to come it is the experience of God's grace, which is beyond man's powers. It is man's rest in the joy of God's boundless love toward him. At some point love must attain a state in which the soul rests in it; but this rest is not monotonous, but always new, always surprising, although always the same. For He who loves is endless in His gifts. And the human being is helped to grow in his joy in these gifts that are always new, always increasing, but from the same love, from the same Lover. Only a supreme Person is able to give this joy, which is always new and which simultaneously is rest and more rest. Nature either bores you through its monotony or requires that you make a continuous effort to organize it. It requires an effort that in time tires you. And it does not offer anything of itself, but it must constantly be overcome. If rest did not come from a person and, in the final analysis, from the supreme Person, the human being would constantly remain unfulfilled in his thirst for love, which is manifested in the benevolent offering of that Person. If this love were finite, man would neither rest statically nor would he move statically in it, but would either descend from it bored, would move on, or would become numb because he was discouraged by impossibility of finding complete love anywhere. Love that rests eternally must be infinite, apophatic, so that we may be able to move and rest in it eternally.[38]

The endless eighth day, the day of the unending light, symbolized by Sunday, signifies precisely this stability or eternal rest in God's infinite love. "The eighth day and the first is the all-radiant presence [parousia] of God, which comes after moving things stop; the presence of God, who dwells entirely, according to righteousness, in the entire being of those who through their will made good use of the reason of existence; and the presence of God, who alone grants them eternal well-being through participation in Him, since He alone exists properly and eternally and is good."[39]

But movement could stop not only in the eternally happy rest within God's infinite love, but also in a contrary state that could never be surpassed. Movement will make the evil ones stop in an "eternal ill-being"[40] that will be sealed by the last judgment. If "eternal well-being" comes from the presence of the God who truly is, then "eternal ill-being" comes from the absence of the One who is, and therefore it means a frightening diminishment of existence. At the last judgment it will be shown that such an existence is possible. This supreme lessening will be unmasked as extreme evil in all its nakedness. At the last judgment such evil will be denied any appearance of good, any illusion of consistency, and any objective or subjective ambiguity about whether its existence was satisfactory will be eliminated. Then evil will appear as total existential disfigurement in those who were possessed by it, in its total lack of light and in its total emptiness of content. But for the extremely evil subjects, this will constitute a supreme suffering, which is certainly a suffering that at the same time constitutes their principle component, because they are incapable of a different state. This too will be a high point of revelation.[41] Evil's emptiness will be shown in its fullness. But this will represent its definitive defeat, after it has been left to exhaust all its masks of the good toward its eventual victory. Evil is unmasked when it has reached desperation, when it sees that there is no point in concealing itself because it knows that there is no one left to be won over through deceit. Its unmasked state is at the same time one of terrible evilness and of a total disaster that is provoked by all creation turning away from those whom evil dominates, because the latter completely refuse to have any relationship with that which exists consistently. For creation itself is rejected by this supreme evilness, as is God.[42] The life of those in hell will not be illumined by the smile of God's face, for they are incapable of beholding it. The full darkness of loneliness—that of not knowing or recognizing the spiritual and fundamental aspect of those who exist—will come upon them; a total lack of trust in the good and a lack of hope that they will ever change their fate, through sensibility toward the good, will rule over them. They too have entered into a powerlessness to ever change.

The mystery of eternal torments—or, better said, of the eternal death of those who arrive at them—is tantamount to the mystery of incurable illness.[43] It is the mystery of created beings becoming extremely hardened in the characteristics of evil after they practice evil.

Such hardened beings no longer experience God and their neighbors as they look at them and speak with them, for the former are no longer able to look at or into the latter, nor can the former be in dialogue with the latter any longer. Their continual unwillingness to communicate has become a total and definitive powerlessness to communicate, while remaining unwillingness at the same time. This state is simultaneously a punishment and a willed state.

Even if in time it secretly finds a certain satisfaction in being enclosed in such a way, the "I" suffers in this exclusive self-affirmation. This state becomes maximally tormenting when it is prolonged eternally. And even in time, if it were total and prolonged too much, it would be equivalent to death. In it man would lose his ability to speak: he would no longer be able to express himself, and in this situation of total enclosure he would no longer find the word that would save him. "Here is shown the deeper meaning of the affirmation that the 'I' exists objectively only in the Word."[44] "As the organ that receives the word, reason is the spiritual eye of man . . . and as deafness of the ear is the sign of physiological closure, so the irrationality of madness is the expression of spiritual closure. And this is the closing off of the 'I' before the 'Thou.'"[45]

The relation between reason and word has been long known from the Greek philosophers and from the Eastern Fathers; to them *logos* means at once "reason" and "word." For both the Holy Fathers and Ebner, the relation between reason and word is all-encompassing: the word is the expression of reason, and through its role of maintaining communion, it is the expression of the relation between "I" and "thou." But through this a new sense of "reason" has come to the surface, a sense corresponding to this aspect of the word: reason is not only the organ that searches for meanings but also for communion, which in fact comprises in itself the true meaning of existence. In both senses reason corresponds to the word; it is the whole word. And surely there is a strong connection between these two senses. The rational creature seeks meanings in order to communicate them; in communication the supreme meaning finds its existence. The meanings interpret the communion, and communion is achieved in the milieu of meanings. The eighth day will be the day of the unending light, for it will be the day of the light of endless meanings sustained by the endless communion; hell, on the contrary, will be the place of the eternal darkness that is the absence of all meaning, because it is the absence of all communion.

Man is created in the image of the divine Word, of the divine Reason, both in the sense of a rational being and in the sense of a being endowed with speech. For one of these does not exist without the other. The human person always speaks by way of responding; he speaks because he must respond to another, because he understands what the other is telling him and because he can give him an understandable response. And he acts by way of confirming the words of his response. In this way he himself becomes a human person and helps others to perfect themselves in this quality; he renders himself sensible and also renders others sensible. He speaks and acts because he must give material form to the need to respond. By nature human persons find that they need to respond in order to actualize themselves as human persons and also in order to cause others to actualize themselves as human persons. A child learns to speak and to act as expected because he has to respond to his mother. But she also teaches him how to speak and act correctly out of a responsibility toward the supreme forum who speaks to her: God. Human beings were created with the need to respond, and thereby they respond to the divine Word. They rationalize because they have to actualize their humanity in words and actions, by responding with meaning, responding correctly; for the divine Reason and the divine Word created them rational and endowed with speech, and placed them in the indissoluble relationship of speech and of reasonable action in communion.

Through sin man fell in a single instant from true rationality and from exercising loving speech in full communion with his neighbor, because the relationship with the Reason, with the divine Word, was weakened in him, as was his acute responsibility toward Him. He who does not fully experience responsibility toward God does not experience it toward his neighbor either, and vice versa. Perverse traits entered into his reason; his word often became a lie, a means of an apparent communion instead of a true communion. Human reason sought meanings in egoistic pleasures, not in communion: it became egoistic, expressing itself in insincere words, in actions contrary to others. Such words and actions no longer sought nor realized real communion, because through them the human person hid his egoistic plans, which were no longer useful to others and which brought evil upon them.

In order to reestablish the human person's word and reason, the divine Word who implants in us the necessity of the word as the response to His call, the supreme Reason who endowed us with reason so that we might be able to speak meaningfully, Himself became a man who meaningfully responds to all the calls of God and men, so that He may be a model to His brothers in humanity. He did this so that they too might help each other through their meaningful words and acts and so that they might develop as complete and true human persons. But because He is a person, the Word and Reason is also a source of action, and therefore He makes the human person a source of righteous acts by which he develops himself correctly and renders sensible the humanity in others through the love he shows them. For this is what a person is: a source of loving acts and words toward others. Only in this way do their subjects, as well as the subjects of those to whom the former address themselves, become true persons. By becoming man, the Son of God has also become a direct source of loving acts and words that transmute relational knowledge to our level; He has proven Himself to be the true man and rendered others' humanity sensible for eternity.

In hell there is a total fall from the right word, which reveals a true reality; from loving acts; and from relationship with Christ, the loving divine and human Word, the Subject of the act that perfects the human person. This means that in hell the fall from the light of meanings and of communion, as well as from the image of the authentic man created after the model of God, is total. It is a fall from the relationship with the Word that obliges man to respond by word and action; he is also obliged to respond because of the Reason that keeps the meanings of true reality present before his reason. This fall is a total departure from the face of the Word and Reason. And this total fall from meanings and communion is tantamount to madness—to the rejection of reality, which he replaces or distorts with the products of his hallucinations—and this is a source of endless torment. Because at the same time those who go through this are in a continual fear of a reality that is distorted in a hallucinatory way. How many times we do not see those persons whose sickly susceptibility, sustained by an uncontrolled pride, causes them to suffer before us from imaginary fears and suspicions; they do not accept us no matter how we behave toward them, whether we show them patience or understanding, indifference or attention, speech or silence. They are reduced to a tormenting incapacity, and they reduce us too to a powerlessness to help them as they unceasingly eat away at themselves. Their noncommunion and nonrationality are not the abolition of communion and reason through deafness and darkness, but their perversion: reason serves as torment for them, the nonsense of their lives lies in the chaotic disorganization of their senses, and hearing others' words is a reason for all kinds of suspicions. Their noncommunion lies in the ineffective communication of this irremediable lack of meaning and in their clinging to others' words and existence so that the latter may suffer even more; thus they distort everything that is communicated to them and reduce all their relationships with others to negative consequences.

But these cases and situations that we know on earth are only a sliver of the noncommunion and nonrationality of hell. In these cases on earth, only one person is mad, and perhaps not entirely. Others are healthy but unable to help him; they are, at least in part, merciful and eager to communicate a certain power to him. In hell, however, all are in a totally lucid madness, that is, they are completely blind and deaf toward others, or have a perverse look and hearing; they communicate their inability to communicate, or distort any communication into a communication devoid of the real ability to communicate. They weep and gnash their teeth with desperation, each one alongside deaf barriers that also weep and gnash their teeth, barriers constituted by other persons. They weep and gnash their teeth on account of their powerlessness to communicate and the evilness they still communicate in this way; each person feels that others are directing this evilness, which is augmented in a hallucinatory way, toward him. For each one sees the face of Satan in all the others. For this reason the torment in which they find themselves is a "sleepless worm."

On the contrary, those in paradise are gathered together again in the Word through whom and according to whose image they have been created, becoming like Him to the maximum degree (Eph 1:10). As He is the Reason of all reasons or the Meaning in which the meanings of all things are illumined, but at the same time He is one because of the Trinity's unity as the Godhead whose life is endless love, so those raised in Him bear His seal in the most luminous form. They are not satiated by contemplating the endless meanings in Him and by the loving communion, for through Him they participate in the love of the Holy Trinity.

In some way, there is no longer time in hell either, because one no longer experiences anything new in it. For where there is no dialogue and no more hope, there is no longer history. But there eternity is an endless torment. It is the eternity of inescapable tragedy, of the bottomless chasm of desperation; the eternity of darkness, of the chaos of the endless and absurd twisting of nonsensical things; the eternity of being lost and chained up in this desperate state, this labyrinth without any exit and without anything new. With great spiritual content St. Cyril of Alexandria described the two states of eternity:

> The righteous dance, the sinners are tied up. The righteous sing, the sinners lament . . . The righteous have the song, the sinners have the chasm. The righteous [are] in the bosom of Abraham, the sinners in Belial's rivers of fire. The righteous are resting, the sinners are condemned. The righteous cool off, the sinners burn. The righteous rejoice, the sinners wither away from sorrow . . . The righteous will delight in the vision of God, the sinners will be troubled by the vision of fire. The righteous [are] in the wedding chamber, the sinners in the infinite chaos. The

righteous in lights, the sinners in the gloom of the tempest. The righteous with the angels, the sinners with the demons . . . The righteous in the midst of light, the sinners in the midst of darkness. The righteous comforted by the Comforter, the sinners tormented by demons. The righteous before the Master's throne, the sinners before the tormenting darkness. The righteous behold eternally the face of Christ, the sinners stand eternally before the devil . . . The righteous are initiated by angels, the sinners by demons . . . The righteous in heaven, the sinners in the abyss.[46]

ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, 10 vols., New York, 1885–87
ET	English translation
NPNF[1]	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols., New York, 1886–89
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols., Paris, 1857–86

NOTES

Foreword

1. On the life and work of Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, see my foreword to vol. 1 of *The Experience of God* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), ix–xxvii. His main publications in English up to 1994 are listed in this foreword, xxv–xxvi, n. 11. To these should be added, more particularly, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002); and *The Holy Trinity: In the Beginning There Was Love* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012). For books and articles on Fr. Dumitru, see my foreword in *The Experience of God*, 1:xxvi, n. 12. More recent publications include A. M. Allchin, "Dumitru Staniloae (1903–93)," *Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 38–44; Maciej Bielawski, *The Philokalical Vision of the World in the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae* (Bydgoszcz, Poland: Wydawnictwo Homini, 1997); Charles Miller, *The Gift of the World: An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000); Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000); Andrew Louth, "The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae," *Modern Theology* 13, no. 2 (2002): 253–67; Lucian Turcescu, "Dumitru Stăniloae," in I. Witte and F. Alexander, eds., *The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1:685–711, 2:537–58; Mihail Neamțu, "Between the Gospel and the Nation: Dumitru Stăniloae's Ethno-Theology," *Archaeus: Studies in the History of Religions* 10, no. 3 (2006): 9–46. On Staniloae's relations with his fellow Romanian theologian Nichifor Crainic (1899–1972), see Christine Hall, *"Pancosmic" Church – Specific Românesc: Ecclesiological Themes in Nichifor Crainic's Writings between*

1922 and 1944 (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Universitet, 2008), esp. 67, 111–14. This bibliographical note does not claim to be exhaustive.

2. Numbers after quotations refer to the relevant page in the text that follows.

3. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Orthodoxy, Life in the Resurrection," *Eastern Churches Review* 2, no. 4 (1969): 369.

4. Quoted in George Every, Richard Harries, and Kallistos Ware, eds., *Seasons of the Spirit: Readings Through the Christian Year* (London: SPCK, 1984), 46.

Chapter 1

Death as Passage to Life Eternal

1. Olivier Clément, *Dialogues avec le patriarche Athénagoras* (Paris: Fayard, 1969), 193.

2. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009), 250.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 249.

6. Paul Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 4th ed. (Gütersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1933), 80–81.

7. Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 44–46.

8. Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 95.

9. Attributed to St. Anthony the Great, *On the Character of Men and on the Virtuous Life: One Hundred and Seventy Texts*, § 49, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, 4 vols., trans. and ed. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979–99), 1:337.

10. St. Mark the Ascetic, *On the Spiritual Law* 54, in *The Philokalia*, 1:114.

11. St. Theodoros the Great Ascetic, *A Century of Spiritual Texts* 57, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 2:24–25.

12. Evagrius the Solitary, *Outline Teaching on Asceticism and Stillness in the Solitary Life* (PG 40:1261); ET Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, *The Philokalia*, 2:36.

13. Rahner, *Theology of Death*, 43.

14. Ibid., 43–44.

15. One of the Desert Fathers advises, "Always keep your death in mind and do not forget the eternal judgement, then there will be no fault in your soul" (*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, rev. ed. [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications; London: Mowbrays, 1984], 64).

16. "Death, therefore, as the end of man as a spiritual person, must be an active consummation from within brought about by the person himself, a

maturing self-realization which embodies the result of what man has made of himself during life, the achievement of total self-possession, a real effectuation of self, the fullness of freely produced personal reality" (Rahner, *Theology of Death*, 31).

17. "At the same time, death as the end of the biological life is simultaneously and in a way which affects the whole man, an irruption from without, a destruction, the intervention of the Fates, an external event that turns up unexpectedly, so that a man's own death, from within, through the act of the person, is at the same time an event of the most radical spoliation of man, activity and passivity at once" (ibid.).

18. "Death appears both as act and fate, as end and fulfilment, as willed and as suffered, as plenitude and emptiness. It seems to involve an empty, unsubstantial uncanny character, a kind of de-personalization, loss of self, destruction, and at the same time the plenitude of a person's attainment of total self-possession, the independence and pure immanence that characterize personality. Yet both these sets of aspects belong to the phenomenon of death. It will never really be possible, therefore, humanly speaking, to say with certainty . . . whether the full term of life reached in death is not in fact the emptiness and futility which till then was concealed, or, conversely, whether the emptiness apparent in death is only the outward aspect of a true plenitude" (ibid., 41).

19. E. L. Mascall, *Theology and the Future* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1968), 97.

20. Ibid., 98. See also Mascall's commentary on Rahner: "Fr Karl Rahner, too, has developed the suggestion that death, so far from releasing the soul from any concern with matter, brings it into a new relation to the whole of the material universe" (Mascall, *Theology and the Future*, 99).

21. Ladislaus Boros, *The Mystery of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 162.

22. Ibid., 144.

23. Ibid., 149–50.

24. Ibid., 164.

25. Ibid., 165.

26. Rahner, *Theology of Death*, 79.

27. "[This theory] does not make it intrinsically clear why it was through Christ's death that we were redeemed, and not through some other possible act of our Lord, which would also have been of infinite value" (ibid., 60). "The satisfaction theory falls short on another point, for it takes for granted from the start that death, as such, is purely passive, an occurrence passively undergone, distinct from human activity . . . [and that] the redeeming act of Christ will not reside in his death as such, but only in his patient and obedient submission to the suffering which caused his death, and this does not do justice to the statements of Scripture" (ibid., 61). "Man's death, in so far as it is his own personal act, extends through his whole life. If this is so, it makes it easier to comprehend how the life and death of Christ in their redemptive significance also form a unity. His life redeems, inasmuch as his

death is axiologically present in his entire life" (ibid., 62). "His death effects our redemption, because it is obedience" (ibid., 63).

Chapter 2

The Immortality of the Soul

1. The thesis of the destruction of the soul through death is maintained by Carl Stange (in his writings *Das Ende aller Dinge*, *Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*, and *Christliche und philosophische Weltanschauung*), Paul Althaus (*Die letzten Dinge* and *Grundriss der Dogmatik*), and Rudolf Otto (*Aufsätze das Numinose betreffend*). These theologians also affirm that the entire man dies, but they make a distinction between death and nonexistence. Otto says, "And so the soul sinks not into not-being, nonentity, but into death, i.e. the cessation of its living function" (*The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey [repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1979], 227). Althaus says that death is distinct from nonexistence because God will bring the dead back to life, through resurrection, but not the things that do not exist. That is to say, God maintains the dead in His concern in order to bring them back to life one day. In fact, in death they ceased to exist. The state of death is not like that of sleep (*Die letzten Dinge*, 139ff.).

2. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 139ff.

3. Ibid., 24.

4. *The Possessed*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1936), 673–74.

5. "Here death loses its weight in that the thought of judgment over a person is shattered" (Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 85).

6. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 255ff., also affirms that immortality cannot be based on the indestructibility of the soul. But then he affirms that it is based on the human person's spiritual life. But is the latter not also something indestructible, especially if sinners too survive? It seems that the soul as spirit cannot exist except in a certain relationship with God, the absolute Spirit. Therein lies its indestructibility.

7. This is how we are to understand St. Maximus the Confessor's argument that in the life to come the soul maintains the functions it has on its own, regardless of its coexistence with the body. "In fact, the soul is either logical and perceptive [noetic] on its own, or by means of a body. And if it is rational and perceptive for its own sake, that is, through its own essence, it also subsists in itself, rational and perceptive. If it is by nature self-subsistent, then it also operates by itself, according to itself, and with a body, thinking and perceiving according to nature, and it will never be without its noetic powers, which are imparted to it by nature. No created being can be deprived of that which is imparted to it by nature as long as it is and exists. Therefore, the soul, which exists eternally, from the time it is born, established by God who has created it in that way, perceives and reasons and knows, as much through itself as with a body, through itself and through its nature. From that time forward one can find no cause that could estrange

the soul from that which is inherent to it, through nature and not through the body, not even after the latter's death. And if the soul is logical and noetic because of the body, the body will be held in higher honor than the soul that came into existence by means of it. Then it is from the body that the rational and perceptive powers [*logos* and *nous*] come, as the soul comes from the body. For if without the body the soul cannot perceive or reason, it is only through the body that perception and reason belong to the soul. And if it is from the body that the soul receives the capacity for perception and reason and, as they say, the soul cannot have this capacity without the body, the soul will not be in any way self-existent. For indeed how would it be so without the body, not having in itself that which characterizes it? Not being a self-existent essence, then it is an accident that only exists by nature in its own body. Therefore, after the dissolution of the body, the soul can only be nothing at all—and especially nothing for those who rave so madly that they deprive the soul of immortality, vain efforts of the disciples of Epicurus and Aristotle" (*Epistle 7: To John the Presbyter*, PG 91:436–37).

8. St. Maximus the Confessor urges us to think about "the soul's solitude after its exit, when it will take nothing along with itself except a conscience branded by the red-hot iron of evil actions" (*Epistle 5: To Constantine*, PG 91:423). See also Gal 6:7–8: "For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

9. Ion Petrovici, *Dincolo de zare. Problema supraviețuirii în cadrul criticii filosofice* (Bucharest, 1939).

10. "Let us call to mind death and soul's terror upon its exit from the body" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 24: To Constantine Sakellarios*, PG 91:612).

11. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 108.

12. *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1541).

Chapter 3
The Individual Judgment and the Possibility of an Eternal Hell

1. M. Richard, "Enfer," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, et al., 15 vols. in 2 pts. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1902–50), 5/1:86ff.

2. "Lessing was the first to have consistently put the idea of a gradual evolution in place of the dualism between world and God, good and evil, immanent and transcendent, heaven and hell" (Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 177). Wilhelm Dilthey says, "Perfection can only be understood in the sense of the spirit being cleansed and gradually raised in God" (*Erlebnis und Dichtung*, in Ernst Tröltsch, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed. [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931], 1:629ff.). Hermann Lüdemann rejects the dualist ending of humankind, and he bases his theory on the shortness of earthly existence (*Christliche Dogmatik* [Bern: Haupt, 1926], 2:622). Schlei-

ermacher considers that sufferings lead inevitably to betterment; on the other hand, they disturb the happiness of those in paradise (in Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 184).

3. St. John Chrysostom says, "For no one of those who have not done away with their sins here, when he hath departed thither shall be able to escape his account for them; but as they who are taken out of these earthly prisons are brought in their chains to the place of judgment, even so all souls, when they have gone away hence bound with the manifold chains of their sins, are led to the awful judgment-seat" (*Homily 14 on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, NPNF^1 10:87).

4. St. John of Damascus, *De iis qui in fide dormierunt* (PG 95:251C).

5. Ibid., 253B.

6. "The doctrine of reincarnation, which has obvious advantages, involves, however, another nightmare—the nightmare of endless incarnations, of infinite wanderings along dark passages; it finds the solution of man's destiny in the cosmos and not in God" (Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 279).

7. *Ambiguum 7* (PG 91:1069); ET in Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 45–47.

8. "For everything that comes into existence is subject to movement, since it is not self-moved or self-powered. If then rational beings come into being, surely they are also moved, since they move from a natural beginning in 'being' toward a voluntary end in 'well-being.' For the end of the movement of those who are moved is 'eternal well-being' itself, just as its beginning is being itself which is God who is the giver of being as well as of well-being. For God is the beginning and the end" (*Ambiguum 7*, PG 91:1077; ET Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 50–51). St. John of Damascus adopted this vision in its entirety (*Dialogue against the Manicheans*, PG 94:1269A–B).

9. The entirety of St. Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua* (PG 91) is a profound defense of the value of movement against Origenism, which compromised movement, considering it to be the mode of falling from the *pleroma* (plenitude).

10. *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:109B–112A); ET Catharine P. Roth, *The Soul and the Resurrection*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 90–92.

11. *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:120A); ET Roth, 96.

12. *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:117C); ET Roth, 95.

13. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 159, observes that if in this life I am to repair mistakes from previous lives, then I should know about these lives, feel responsible for those deeds, consciously participate in that reparation, for consciousness gives a special intensity to my reparative action. Reparation presupposes responsibility. But for this I must hold my past lives within a unity of consciousness. But the unity of my existences is just a theory, not

an experience of consciousness. Does anyone have an interest in deceiving us regarding the unity of our lives? And Karl Holl says that exact reparation cannot be conceived of, not even in the system of Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy, because man no longer returns to the same situations so that he may repay those whom he had defrauded ("Steiners Anthroposophie," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1928], 484, 487).

14. "Where eternity is thought of by man, nothing decisive occurs on earth, no deed that connects us to eternity . . . Historical temporality, as decisive temporality, exists only there where eternity has entered time, where the Logos who entered history and has become man reveals to man—who exists in history—his origin and his eternal goal as deciding object of faith. Only through this revelation of eternity does our temporal history gain its participation in eternity. Thus, only through and in this eternity I, this singular man, this individual person, receive eternal significance and my personal existence is taken seriously . . . In the eternity revealed to me by Christ, my eye is opened to the knowledge that God, *my Lord*, looks at *me* from eternity with the eternal look of love, and that is why my existence and my personal individual life receive eternal significance" (Emil Brunner, *Die christliche Lehre von Gott*, vol. 1 of *Dogmatik* [Zurich, 1946], 326).

15. Richard, "Enfer," 60.

16. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 266ff.

17. *Epistle 1: To George, the Prefect of Africa* (PG 91:389). St. Maximus' affirmation that the one in hell "loves" God must be understood as his acknowledgement of Him as just and deserving love, without the possibility of actually loving Him, because of the passions in which he habitually found himself. Even the demons believe and tremble (Jas 2:19).

18. *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1569).

19. Ibid., 1544A–B. St. Symeon the New Theologian also identifies happiness with communion with Christ, and unhappiness with loneliness; he says in the prayer before Holy Communion, "He who partakes of the divine and deifying Gifts is not alone, but with You, my Christ . . . Therefore, tearfully and with humility of soul, I approach You. Do not reject me, that I may not be alone, without You, the giver of life, my breath, my life, my joy, the salvation of the world."

20. Ibid., 1547.

21. Ibid., 1545.

22. Ibid., 1573.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:388).

26. Ibid., 385D–388A.

27. Ibid., 389.

28. Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 171.

29. Ibid., 160.

30. Ibid., 160–61.

31. St. Isaac the Syrian says that "those who are punished in Gehenna are scourged by the scourge of love. For what is so bitter and vehement as the punishment of love? I mean that those who have become conscious that they have sinned against love suffer greater torment from this than from any fear of punishment . . . The power of love works in two ways: it torments those who have played the fool, even as happens here when a friend suffers from a friend; but it becomes a source of joy for those who have observed its duties" (St. Isaac the Syrian, *Homily 28*, in *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2nd rev. ed. [Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011], 266).

32. *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1573).

33. Ibid., 1569.

34. Ibid., 1541.

35. Ibid., 1569.

36. Ibid., 1541.

37. "The idea of hell is the expression of an acute and intense experience of the indestructible nature of personality" (Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 267). And this indestructible nature of personality is willed by God.

38. *Epistle 7: To John the Presbyter* (PG 91:437).

39. *Epistle 6: To Archbishop John* (PG 91:425–29).

40. Monk Mitrophan says that "the powers of the soul, acting on earth, act also in the other world when the soul passes there. Thus, the rich man mentioned by the Saviour in the Gospel (Luke 16:22–25) went down to hell in the soul after death . . . All the soul's powers are in action; conscience shows the reasons for the already unavoidable misfortune of the present; the action of the inward and outward senses bring about a cheerless torment, and, finally, the activity of the will strives without success to lighten the state of the soul, and the action of the memory of his brethren on earth and concern for their lot after death is a sign of the inner feelings and activity of the mind which have as their object the fate of his brethren who still remain on earth" (*How Our Departed Ones Live*, vol. 1, trans. John Shaw [Chelsea, MI: Sheridan Books, 2005], 216–17).

Jean Kovalevsky even speaks of the stages passed through by souls who have done good or evil, but he admits that the stages of those found to have committed evil end in a state of frozen immobility. In describing the initial stage for the souls who have committed evil, he follows St. John of Damascus, who says that those souls suffer from the inability to satisfy their passions. He speaks of a sort of "psychology" according to which all those souls somehow feel their deeds, much like an amputee feels the pain at the point where his hand was. He speaks of a "subtle body," which to me does not seem very fitting. He continues, "You may find yourself bodiless, but you will take your psychology with you. If it is not satisfied or if it has no hope of being so, then, inevitably, your vitality and your life force will be diminished; your suffering will be greater or lesser inasmuch as you did not overcome the attachment to your psychology" ("La destinée de l'âme après la mort," in *Présence orthodoxe*, no. 27 [1974]: 20).

There is a different situation for the person who has left this world spiritually strengthened: "After death the soul is more vital than here below because it does not have the hindrances that we have on earth: worries, fatigue, etc. The vitality and vigor of him who has lived spiritually are so strong that he can help others and evolve in this vitality" (ibid.).

Then he presents the following stages of the state of ascending (good) souls. *First stage*: For the first three days (taken symbolically), the soul is not separated from the body. It therefore must stay around the dead person in prayer. Detached from the body after forty days, the soul reaches a place where it is "like the angels in heaven." *Second stage*: Now on a higher level, the soul becomes the bearer of certain universal messages. *Third stage*: The soul is introduced to listening to the music of the world's spheres or laws, in God's thought about the world. From here forward it is able to ascend to the level of living directly through God's gifts (ibid., 22–24).

The stages of the descending souls are as follows. *First stage*: The soul is overwhelmed by dread. *Second stage*: In this dread the soul withdraws and shrivels up within itself, separating itself from all others. *Third stage*: The soul revolts against the harmony of the world, which it now perceives as distorted. *Fourth stage*: It refuses to accept anything from the outside. It wants to be alone. *Fifth stage*: Cold melancholy and infinite sadness. The soul refuses any evolution or exit. It finally hardens itself in this position and slides toward self-destruction, falling into the infernal fire (ibid., 24). But this state is still a sensory state, not a nonsensory one, so there is a certain movement in it.

Chapter 4

Christ as Judge and Witnesses to the Individual Judgment

1. Canon of Supplication at the Parting of the Soul from the Body, in *The Great Book of Needs*, 4 vols., trans. St. Tikhon's Monastery (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1998–99), 3:92.

2. *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1541, 1569).

3. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:385).

4. Monk Mitrophan, *How Our Departed Ones Live*, 18–19.

5. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Tenth Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, vol. 1, trans. Alexander Golitzin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 145.

6. St. Isaac the Syrian, *Homily 28*, in *Ascetical Homilies*, 266.

7. Canon of Supplication, in *The Great Book of Needs*, 3:89, adapted.

8. Ibid., 91.

9. *Katanyxis syngramma hieron*, ed. Paisios the Hieromonk (Athens: Rusopulos, 1875), 377.

10. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Tenth Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 147.

11. Idem, *Hymn 42*, in *Divine Eros: Hymns of St. Symeon the New Theologian*, trans. Daniel K. Griggs (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010), 305.

12. Ibid., 305–6.

13. Idem, *Hymn 43*, in *Divine Eros*, 311.

14. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Tenth Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 163, 164–65.

15. *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1373).

16. *Oration on Repentance*, in *Katanyxis*, 353ff.

17. According to Symeon Metaphrastes the offer and the commandment to do good in this very moment are an appeal from God, who wants every moment to be valued. Contrary to this, the thought of procrastination is sent by the devil to make the human person avoid God's call. Thus the demon convinces man to get used to continuously delaying his actions, ultimately paralyzing his will and desensitizing him to God's call. The demon allows for good intentions in order to deceive the human person into thinking that he is not completely evil. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Kierkegaard spoke about the inability thus introduced into the soul in his writing *Practice in Christianity* [also translated as *Training in Christianity*]. This demon makes you excuse yourself for throwing away your entire life with the thought of future reincarnations. The thought of procrastination is a temptation to avoid making the required effort. It is an insidious delusion: at first we do not refuse to do a good thing, but we will do it tomorrow, although in fact we will never do it but will continuously deceive ourselves that we will do it. Not only will you fail to do tomorrow the good required of you today (for tomorrow the person who needed that good will no longer be in front of you), but you will become accustomed to continuously postponing the performance of any good deed. Symeon Metaphrastes says, "The Lord tells you, 'If today you hear My voice, do not harden your heart'; therefore strive to hear the voice of the Savior and do not delay until tomorrow. For this is what the enemy suggests to you when he finds you obedient" (*Oration 28*, in *Katanyxis*, 345).

St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Those who say 'Let us sin in our youth, and we will repent in our old age' subject themselves to the blows of the demons' mockery, they are derided by them, and by sinning willfully they will not be worthy of repentance . . . For those who say 'Today we sin, and tomorrow we will repent' have become vain in their thoughts, have darkened their foolish heart, and have lost today, corrupting and soiling their body, staining their soul, darkening their mind, agitating their understanding, and mudding their conscience; and tomorrow they are destitute . . . They can neither repent in their souls for the past sins nor set aright their future actions. Those who do not seek what they have lost cannot preserve what they have either" (*Homily 14: On the Departure of the Soul and the Second Coming*, PG 77:1088).

18. *On the Practice of the Virtues, Contemplation and the Priesthood*, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 2:366.

19. St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "The Judge will not need any prosecutor, any witness, any proof, any demonstration. He will present before those I have wronged everything I have done, spoken, and decided. No one will help us to escape the punishment: neither father, nor mother, nor son, nor daughter, nor any other relative, nor neighbor, nor friend, nor defender, nor a gift of money, nor the amount of wealth, nor the greatness of power; all these will be scattered like dust in ashes, and alone the accused will alone await the sentence that will liberate or condemn him in accordance with what he has done. Alas, alas, my conscience will betray me, and the Scripture will cry out and teach me . . . O God, true are Your works, just is Your judgment, and straight are Your ways . . . God's justice is just. I was summoned and I did not obey; I was taught and I did not pay attention; I was chastised and I laughed" (*Homily 14*, PG 77:1072–73).

20. The writers of the *Philokalia* describe as follows this work of the demons at the departure of the soul: "When the soul leaves the body, the enemy advances to attack it, fiercely reviling it and accusing it of its sins in a harsh and terrifying manner. But if a soul enjoys the love of God and has faith in Him, even though in the past it has often been wounded by sin, it is not frightened by the enemy's attacks and threats. Strengthened by the Lord, winged by joy, filled with courage by the holy angels that guide it, encircled and protected by the light of faith, it answers the malicious devil with great boldness: 'Enemy of God, fugitive from heaven, wicked slave, what have I to do with you? You have no authority over me; Christ the Son of God has authority over me and over all things. Against Him have I sinned, before Him shall I stand on trial, having His precious Cross as a sure pledge of His saving love towards me. Flee far from me, destroyer! You have nothing to do with the servants of Christ.' When the soul says all this fearlessly, the devil turns his back, howling aloud and unable to withstand the name of Christ. Then the soul swoops down on the devil from above, attacking him like a hawk attacking a crow. After this it is brought rejoicing by the holy angels to the place appointed for it in accordance with its inward state" (St. John of Karpathos, *For the Encouragement of the Monks in India who had Written to Him: 100 Texts*, § 25, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 1:303–4).

21. *Epistle 24* (PG 91:612).

22. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:380).

23. *Epistle 5* (PG 91:423).

24. Symeon Metaphrastes, *Katanyxis*, 544.

25. Ibid., 347–48.

26. St. John of Damascus, *Dialogue against the Manicheans* (PG 94:1519).

27. Ibid., 1517.

28. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium 22* (PG 90:321); ET Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 118.

29. Idem, *Ambiguum 7* (PG 91:1081); ET Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 58.

30. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:388C).

31. Ibid., 377D–380A.

32. From the Office for the Burial of a Layman, in *The Great Book of Needs*, 3:208.

33. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 2: To John the Cubicularius* (PG 91:400A–B); ET Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1996), 88.

34. *Epistle 2* (PG 91:404A); ET Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 90.

35. *Epistle 2* (PG 91:400C); ET Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 89.

Chapter 5

The Condition of Souls between Death and Resurrection

1. See also St. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* (PG 94:1228); ET Frederic H. Chase Jr., *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 406.

2. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Blessed Philogonius* (PG 48:749–50).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. *Oratio altera de igne purgatorio*, in *Patrologia orientalis*, vol. 15, *Documents relatifs au concile de Florence*, trans. Louis Petit (1927), 119.

8. *Responsio ad quaestiones latinorum*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 15:162–63.

9. This teaching was officially defined by Pope Benedict XII in 1336 in the bull *Benedictus Deus* against Pope John XXII, who maintained that after death souls that lack any sin are received in heaven, but they will not partake of the vision of the divine essence except after the last judgment (P. Bernard, "Ciel," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 2:2510).

10. Mark of Ephesus, *Responsio ad quaestiones latinorum*, in *Patrologia orientalis*, 15:157: "The divine essence cannot be comprehended except by the Only Begotten and by the Holy Spirit," says St. Basil the Great (*Against Eunomius* 1.14, PG 29:544). Mark of Ephesus mentions the axiom of the Fathers: You can see only if you have something of what you see and know. You see the light outside through the light of your eyes. Thus to see the divine essence means to partake of it, which is impossible. The seraphim themselves see the radiance, the glory, and the divine energies because they partake of them (*Patrologia orientalis*, 15:160).

Because it knows only created grace, it is difficult for Catholic theology to say through what means man can contemplate the divine essence. The only conclusion is pantheism.

11. Regarding the "punishment of the senses" (*poena sensus*) in hell, that is, regarding the punishments somehow suffered physically from a material fire, we quote: "This name, 'punishment of the senses,' has been given to the second kind of punishment of the damned, because the principal

suffering of this nature comes from sensible material objects . . . In a general way, it is therefore necessary to admit that the souls and the demons in hell are really and physically tortured in a certain way by the created beings that are instruments of God; and in this consists the punishment of the senses" (Richard, "Enfer: Synthèse de l'enseignement théologique," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 5/1:103).

As regards the punishments of the senses in purgatory, after the Council of Florence the Roman Catholics persevered in their doctrine, and their great theologians speak of the fire of purgatory as of something certain. However, they have avoided condemning the opinion of the Greeks because of the authority of the Council of Florence (A. Michel, "Feu du purgatoire," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 5/1:2746). Regarding the differences between Orthodox and Catholics on purgatory, paradise, and hell, see our study "Starea sufletelor după judecata particulară în învățătura ortodoxă și catolică" [The state of souls after the individual judgment in Orthodox and Catholic teaching], in *Ortodoxia: revista Patriarhiei Române* 5, no. 4 (1953): 545–615.

12. "And this will come about, if we give our souls up to the Spirit, and persuade our flesh to get acquainted with its proper position, for in this way we shall make it also spiritual; as also if we be listless we shall make our soul carnal . . . It rests with thee henceforward whether this shall be or the other" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Romans*, § 8, NPNF^1 11:434).

13. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 240.

14. "God is infinitely above all beings, whether participant or are participable" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.49, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 2:124). "Briefly, these include life, immortality, simplicity, immutability, and infinity, and all other qualities that contemplative vision perceives as substantially appertaining to God" (ibid., 2:123).

15. Clement of Alexandria was the first to speak about the progressive perfection after death (*Stromata* 7.3).

16. See *The Celestial Hierarchy* 4.2 (PG 3:180A).

17. St. Gregory Palamas, *Oration to the Hesychasts*, in *Τά συγγράμματα*, ed. Panagiotis Chrestou, 1:517. In order to better reconcile the saints' stability within communion with God with the continual movement in that communion, St. Maximus the Confessor says that until the soul has reached "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13), it feeds on God's good things in order to grow; once there, it feeds on the endless sweetness of that nourishment so that it may sustain itself in godlike perfection (*Two Hundred Texts on Theology* 2.88, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 2:160). In another place St. Maximus says that therefore here on earth, where we are in a state of activity, we will come to the end of time, when power and the activity will cease. But in the age to come, we will not be active but will experience through participation, and that is why we will never reach the end of our deification. For that participation will be

endless, and there will be no reason that will limit the endless deification of those who participate in it (*To Thalassius 59*, PG 90:609). St. Maximus strongly connects this endless deification with the potential to endlessly experience it as a gift of God, and not as the effect of man's effort. One cannot deny man's infinite capacity to delight in an infinite gift. In another place St. Maximus specifies that this "suffering," or experience of an infinite gift, does not mean insensibility, but the fact of being able to infinitely sense a gift, or a state received as a gift and not as the effect of the natural powers of the righteous.

18. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Two Hundred Texts* 2.89, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 2:160–61.

19. *Ambigua* (PG 91:1361–64).

20. "Then picture all the blessings that await the righteous: intimate communion with God the Father and His Anointed, with angels, archangels, principalities and all the saints, the kingdom and its gifts, the gladness and the joy" (Evagrios the Solitary, *Outline Teaching*, in *The Philokalia*, trans. Palmer, Sherrard, and Ware, 1:36).

21. Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1990), 262.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Kontakion from *The Service of the Small Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos*, rev. ed., trans. Demetri Kangelaris and Nicholas Kasemeotes (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), 16.

25. From the funeral service, Ode 5.

26. That is why it is called "the sacrifice of praise."

27. Mark of Ephesus, commenting on Heb 11:39–40, says, "We are to understand this with respect to all believers and righteous until the coming of the Lord; for just as those predecessors did not reach perfection apart from the apostles, neither did the apostles [reach perfection] apart from the martyrs, nor the latter apart from those who have entered and will enter the good vineyard of the Church" (*Oratio altera*, in *Patrologia orientalis*, 15:114).

28. *Homily 31 on the Gospel of St. Matthew* (PG 57:375); ET NPNF^1 10:209.

29. *Oratio altera*, in *Patrologia orientalis*, 15:114. He is referring to Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 7.7 (PG 3:336).

30. *Oratio prima de igne purgatorio*, in *Patrologia orientalis*, 15:43.

31. St. Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassius 22* (PG 90:1362–65). St. Maximus also speaks of partaking of the sacrificed Christ on increasingly higher levels (*Ambigua*, PG 91:1362–65).

32. "And thus the soul and the body in a way sink into the abyss of that deep sea, and man loses, so to speak, the natural activity of his powers, not even having words to express what he feels . . . This is a sign that he has sunk into his nothingness, and he makes himself small in God as if he were nothing, as if he had never received anything from Him . . . For man's spirit

is lost in God's spirit" (Jean Tauler, "Deuxième sermon pour la cinquième dimanche après la Trinité," in *Sermons de Jean Tauler*, vol. 2, trans. M. Charles Sainte-Foi [Paris, 1855], 234). Sergius Bulgakov says that the humblest act of love is "to give one's life for the Other, to devote oneself wholly to the One who comes, to lose one's I in voluntary, sacrificial self-annulment . . . through an unceasing, uninterrupted feat of self-renunciation" (*The Friend of the Bridegroom*, trans. Boris Jakim [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], 3). It is no less true that Christ accepts this sacrifice from human persons by helping them make their offering to the Father, together with Him, as St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote at length in *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*.

33. The Church prays even today for all those who have fallen asleep, both righteous and sinners, and for their salvation, not knowing which ones are righteous. Only for the canonized saints does the Church not ask for the forgiveness of sins, but at the Eucharist this expression is used: "Again we offer unto You this spiritual sacrifice . . . for those who repose in the faith, forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles . . . ," which cannot mean anything else other than "for their glory," for their advancement "from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3:18).

34. *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Ward, 137.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. "The transformation of our divine and selfish nature into the nature of the Church, that is to say, the reunion of our human person with Christ and with our fellow human being within the one nature of the Church, becomes one of the foundations of our prayers for all human beings, and especially for the deceased, and of our faith in the value of the prayers of the saints and [in the value] of infant baptism on account of the faith of their spiritual parents [godparents]" (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Dialogues on the Holy Trinity*, PG 75:696D–697A).

38. St. John of Damascus, *De iis qui in fide dormierunt* (PG 95:269D).

39. Ibid., 252C.

40. Ibid., 268A.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 253C.

45. Quoted in ibid., 269.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 263D.

48. Ibid., 261C.

49. Ibid., 254C.

50. "The interdiction from Exodus (20:4) and in Deuteronomy (5:12–19) constitutes an "incised" prefiguration of the Incarnation, purely apophatic; it discards the idol out of expectation [of the Messiah], out of the contemplation of the [divine] Face. The Incarnation has meaning only in anticipation of this biblical revelation of an inaccessible but still personal

transcendence, that is, one capable of transcending itself in order to become communicable. It is therefore a refusal to confine the Living One within the immanence of a sanctified nature" (Olivier Clément, "Consideration sur la spiritualité de l'icône," conference held at the Theological Institute in Bucharest, May 1974).

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. *Third Refutation of the Iconoclasts* (PG 99:400D); ET St. Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 86.

54. *Third Refutation* (PG 99:405B); ET *On the Holy Icons*, 90–91.

55. The physicist Bernhard Philberth says that only nothingness does not define itself in any way (in *Der Dreieine* [The Triune]).

56. Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon*, 207.

57. *The Mystical Theology* 5 (PG 3:1048); ET Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 141.

58. *Mystical Theology* 1 (PG 3:1000B); ET Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, 136.

59. Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon*, 236. At the previously mentioned conference at the Theological Institute in Bucharest, May 1974, Olivier Clément said, "We have considered . . . God's Form and His Face, as communicability, manifestation, [and] expression within the Holy Trinity. One could even say that the *logoi* of things that are found in God and are their forms would imply that God, as bosom of these forms, is the virtual Form of all forms. Even the name 'Logos' that is attributed to the Son of God means that He is this Form above all forms, above all images of created beings. All these images are produced and sustained by the uncreated energies."

60. *Third Refutation of the Iconoclasts* (PG 99:429A–B); ET *On the Holy Icons*, 109–10.

61. Ibid., 110.

62. *Letter 161* (PG 99:1502–4).

63. *The Great Book of Needs*, 2:217, adapted.

64. Ibid.

Chapter 6

The End of the Present World

1. "Unending history would be meaningless. And if within unending history uninterrupted progress were revealed, that is not an idea which our minds could accept, because it would mean that every living thing, living now or called upon to live in the future, every generation that lives, would be made into a means to serve future generations, and so on for ever, endlessly . . . Endless progress, an endless process, means the triumph of death. It is only the resurrection of all that lived which can impart meaning to the historical process of the world, a meaning, that is, which is commensurable

with the destiny of personality" (Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, trans. R. M. French [San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2009], 229).

2. *Selecta in Psalmos, Homily 2 on Psalm 36* (PG 12:1329–30).

3. See also St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In illud, tunc ipse Filius subjicietur* (PG 44:1304ff.).

4. As can be seen, Pascal's words "Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world" were uttered by Origen many years before.

5. Origen, *In Leviticum, Homily 7* (PG 12:478–82).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. H.-M. Féret, *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean: Vision chrétienne de l'histoire* (Paris: Corrêa, 1943), 243–46.

11. Ibid., 259.

12. Ibid.

13. Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, 229.

14. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 243.

15. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 82–83.

16. "'Le monde' dans l'Écriture Sainte," in *Irénikon* 42, no. 1 (1969): 6–32.

17. John K. Downey, ed., *Love's Strategy: The Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 30.

18. Ibid., 31.

19. Ibid.

20. Erwin Reisner, *Geschichte als Sündenfall und Weg zum Gericht* (Munich, 1929).

21. Jürgen Moltmann, *Die Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1965), 203–4.

22. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 245.

23. Hans Wilhelm Schmidt especially makes such arguments in *Zeit und Ewigkeit*, 1927. See Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 245–47.

24. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 303.

25. Wilhelm Müller, *Die Adventisten: Was man von ihnen wissen muss?* (Hamburg: Advent Verlag, 1932).

26. Ibid.

27. Theodor Häring, *Der christliche Glaube*, 2nd ed. (Calw, Germany: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1912), 676f.

28. Leonhard Ragaz, *Weltreich, Religion und Gottesherrschaft* (Erlenbach-Zürich: Rotapfel-Verlag, 1922), 2:425.

29. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 294.

30. Franz Hermann Reinhold von Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit* (Erlangen, Germany: Deichert, 1880), 2:47.

31. Karl Albert Auberlen, *Das römische Reich*, 230, 233, 345ff.

32. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 295n1.

33. Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit*, 47, 7, 8.

34. Franz Spemann, *Jerusalem, Wittenberg und Rom* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1920), 214.

35. Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge*, 300–1.

36. Ibid., 303, where Althaus quotes Iraeneus, known as a chiliast: "For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering" (*Against Heresies* 5.32, ANF 1:561).

37. See Féret, *L'Apocalypse*, 304–5. Daniel Hoffmann (*Enzyklopädie*, p. 109ff.) says that "the community is transfigured so that the community of the living God might be made manifest in opposition to the world. After the arrival of the Church, it has remained in contradiction with the essence of the world, and now its contradiction is suppressed. The transfigured community is now able to begin a new kind of activity, just as Christ unfolds through it His new activity, which convinces the world that it is here that salvation has been achieved and that the world itself is subjected to this salvation." Althaus says that here, in an impossible theological tableau, are gathered history, miracle, enmity against the world, and that which shatters history: the transfiguration of nature, the resurrection, the renewal of the perfect community. Gottfried Thomasius (*Christi Person und Werk*, 3/2:464ff.) says the following about this vision: "A strange thought: God's happy community, spiritually and physically perfect, with its transfigured Lord in its midst, in the midst of a humankind where there are still deadly sins—and then a history of this community that again lives constrained by those outside, even in a sort of suffering . . . cannot have as its seat of existence anything but the old, untransfigured world."

38. *Responses to the Questions of a Hierarch* 28, in *Treatise on All Dogmas of Our Orthodox Christian Faith* [in Romanian] (Bucharest, 1865), 319.

39. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 92–93.

40. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (ANF 9:320).

41. *Ambigua* (PG 91:1280–81).

42. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 50–51.

43. *In illud, tunc ipse Filius subjicietur* (PG 44:1317–20).

44. *In Hexaemeron* (PG 44:72). Cf. Jérome Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1953), 55: "Within the original divine design the whole species was going to be instantaneously realized in its totality."

45. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (PG 44:1109C); ET Casimir McCambley, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1987), 271.

46. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 56.

Chapter 7

The Coming of Christ and the Image of the World Made New

1. "Just as our bodies, although they dissolve for a time, do not pass away forever, but will be renewed again at the resurrection, so, too, will heaven and earth and all that is within them—that is, all of creation—be made anew and liberated from the bondage of corruption . . . In the same way, creation, too, after having grown old and been spoiled by our sins, is dissolved in fire by the Maker of all, and then forged anew and transmuted, and becomes incomparably brighter and newer than the world which we see now" (St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 36).

Methodius of Olympus says, "The creation, then, after being restored to a better and more seemly state, remains . . . [so] that, when we have risen and shaken off the mortality of the flesh . . . and have been set free from sin, it also shall be freed from corruption . . . Wherefore the earth and the heaven must exist again after the conflagration and shaking of all things" (*Ex libro de resurrectione*, PG 18:273–76; ET *From the Discourse on the Resurrection*, ANF 6:366).

And St. Maximus the Confessor says, "For [this world] recedes and everything in it withers away. There will be, truly there will be, the hour when the dreadful trumpet will sound with a strange blare, and this universe will dissolve, breaking up the entire order of things that we now see here, and this world of appearances will pass away as it finds its appropriate completion and its end. And the noetic world, now hidden, will manifest itself to the eyes, the ears, and the *nous*, inaugurating strange mysteries" (*Epistle 1*, PG 91:389). He also says, "The entire order of the visible world will pass away with a great noise, all the elements being burned up and dissolved by the conflagration of an immense blaze that, since the Pure One has come, will purify the creation that we stained" (*Epistle 4*, PG 91:416).

2. St. Isaac the Syrian (*Homily 28*, in *Ascetical Homilies*, 266) says that the manifestation of Christ is like a scourge, or fire, for the rejected. But because they do not feel Christ in this fire, He may appear to them as a material fire. For the sinners who are not to be totally condemned, the Lord will act as a fire: on one hand painful, and on the other hand transformative. Symeon Metaphrastes says, "O my unfortunate and wretched soul, when I think of the Lord's coming and dreadful manifestation I shake, I go out of my mind, and I am overwhelmed with trembling and fear and do not know what to think. For who could stand before His glory when He comes to destroy the earth? Who could bear His vehement anger against me when the powers of heaven shake, the sun is darkened, and the moon no longer gives its light? What fear and trembling will there be then, when all the nations of the earth see the King of Glory coming with great power and much glory on the clouds of heaven? 'The heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire'—as Peter, the head of the apostles, said—'the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up' [2 Pet 3:10]. Thus, my

soul, if all these will end up this way, how must we be when all things melt away out of fear of the Lord? For then there will be a new heaven and a new earth, when the trumpet will sound with force" (*Oration 29*, in *Katanyxis*, 349). This description partially repeats that of St. Maximus the Confessor (*Epistle 1*, PG 91:380). The expression "all things melt away out of fear" indicates the effect that a strong feeling has upon all created things, first of all upon souls and through them upon created things. There is no discontinuity between the soul and material things.

3. St. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* (PG 94:1220); ET Chase, *An Exact Exposition*, 401.

4. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 38, 39.

5. Ibid., 35.

6. The simultaneity of the Lord's appearance and the bodily resurrection is also seen in the fact that certain Church writers, following Matthew 25:32, say that first the Lord's appearance will occur, and then the resurrection of human persons at the judgment (Theophanes Cerameus, *Homily 18*, PG 132:397).

7. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 41. In fact the very matter of things and bodies is light. Their natural light will be permeated by the Spirit's immaterial light through their souls. In this ocean of spiritual light, the structures of persons will be even more clearly evident, as will the unity among them; things will be beautified and subjectified as a common body and as a common spiritual content of the extraordinary richness and beauty of persons.

8. Ibid., 39.

9. Ibid., 38.

10. Ibid., 39.

11. Ibid., 39, 40.

12. Ibid., 40.

13. Ibid., *Tenth Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 143.

14. Ibid., 146.

15. Ibid., 143.

16. Ibid., *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 42.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 41.

19. "And one must not understand doxology statically, as an immovable contemplation of the unalterably given, shown or seen, but one must grasp it dynamically, as a continual creative work in cognition, an ever deepening knowledge of the Creator in Himself and in creation" (Sergius Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder: On Angels*, trans. Thomas Allan Smith [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 121).

20. Bulgakov maintains that the entirety of divine beauty comes to us through the angelic world: "Human art has its prototype in angelic art; human artistry becomes related to angelic artistry where it has its own foundation and ascends along with it to the prime source, to God, to Beauty . . . In

song humankind and all creation truly unite with the song of angels as such, despite all the difference in its perfection and quality . . . One can say that only a certain participation in song and music, which fill the angelic life as doxology, is accessible to humankind and the human world. This is one of the multiform expressions of the reality of Jacob's Ladder, along which the angels of God ascend and descend from heaven to earth . . . The foundation for the art of sound is found in the angelic world, in its harmonies" (ibid., 124–26). However, we must observe that there are direct intuitions of the divine beauty in the Holy Scripture (in the Psalms and in the apostles' flashes of understanding) and in the saints. See also Eph 3:10, which says that the angels know God's wisdom through the Church. Many times, however, the angels accompany God in the act of His revelation. It is true that the angels, as pure spirits, reflect the divine beauty in a more refined way. But when they are purified, human beings are granted the ability to grasp God's beauty especially through sensible forms. It can be said that God manifests Himself, with His light, in such an overwhelming way through the angels that they become invisible when man receives the revelation of God's presence. On the other hand the human being captures divine beauty in forms in which the angels cannot capture it: in the words of great poetry, in sculptural and artistic forms. Perhaps in this sense the human being will exist in a continuous creation in the life to come. Not only angelic and human songs will be continuously new, but also every human form that expresses God's infinite mystery.

21. Ibid., 126–27.

22. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 41–42. St. Maximum the Confessor describes the transformation of the world as its spiritual (divine) beauty and meanings coming out into the light; this beauty and these meaning are now hidden under the thickened opacity of our passionate and material interest in the world. "There will be, truly there will be, the hour when the dreadful trumpet will sound with a strange blare, and this universe will dissolve, breaking up the entire order of things that we now see here, and this world of appearances will pass away as it finds its appropriate completion and its end. And the noetic world, now hidden, will manifest itself to the eyes, the ears, and the *nous*, inaugurating strange mysteries" (*Letter 1*, PG 91:389). Thus not only will visible forms not cease to exist, but sounds as well. But all will receive an amazing beauty and transparence. That trumpet, which is nothing other than a divine power, will shake and destroy all things with an extraordinary and tumultuous sound, transforming them into a world of unimaginable beauty. That sound itself will at the same time change into a sound of unfathomable beauty, as a sweet testimony to the divine love and its call. Through its tumultuous call, both sweet for the righteous and condemnatory for the wicked, this sound will awaken the body of the dead or, better said, will give souls the power to bring their bodies into a new and eternal life. Through this human persons will be called to a "great, dreadful, and ultimate conclusion" (ibid.).

23. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 7* (PG 91:437–40); *Ambigua* (PG 91:1088).

24. *Ambigua* (PG 91:1104).

25. "The distinction in cognition of the world is determined, further, by the fact that one can call it *the disinterestedness* of angelic cognition in contrast to the unwillingly selfish, pragmatic, economic-technical relation to cognition among humans, for whom the world is the arena of struggle for existence, of labor in the sweat of one's brow. This imposes on human cognition the stamp of dependency, self-interest. On the contrary, angelic cognition possesses freedom, generally inherent only in art; it is cognition as creative work, as mental painting" (Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 122). Like Berdyaev, Bulgakov emphasizes almost exclusively the artistic-creative character of the heavenly cognition. But in that cognition one must see above all the cognition proper to the love of neighbor and of God, the supreme loving Person who became accessible to the highest degree in Christ. This cognition is the supreme understanding. It is given to us partly in this earthly life. By lovingly understanding our neighbors and God, we also understand things as manifestations of them, as means of communion between persons, means of extreme transparency; therefore these things are beautiful, because they have the capacity to be imprinted with all the nuances of loving sentiments that persons have toward each other. True art is the work of love.

Chapter 8
The Resurrection of the Body

1. "For the whole world will be deluged with fire from heaven, and burnt for the purpose of purification and renewal; it will not, however, come to complete ruin and corruption. For if it were better for the world not to be than to be, why did God, in making the world, take the worse course? But God did not work in vain, or do that which was worst" (Methodius of Olympus, *Ex libro de resurrectione*, PG 18:273; ET *Discourse on the Resurrection*, ANF 6:365).

2. *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life*, 36.

3. Ibid., 37.

4. Methodius of Olympus, *Ex libro de resurrectione* (PG 18:277–86); ET *Discourse on the Resurrection* (ANF 6:366).

5. Jacques Farges maintains that at bottom "it seems that there is no disagreement between the Alexandrian doctor and the bishop of Olympus" (*Les idées morales et religieuses de Méthode d'Olympe* [Paris, Beauchesne, 1929], 211). Origen's position was that resurrected bodies will no longer need to be nourished or reproduce. In this sense he calls them "spiritual." Ferdinand Prat supports Origen's orthodoxy regarding resurrected bodies. Prat says that according to Origen, "the same individual is called together with his body that properly belongs to him to share in the divine joy or to bear the torments of hell" (*Origène: le theologien et l'exégète* [Paris: Bloud et cie,

1907], 94). In *Against Celsus*, book 5, chap. 23, Origen says, "We, therefore, do not maintain that the body which has undergone corruption resumes its original nature, any more than the grain of wheat which has decayed returns to its former condition. But we do maintain, that as above the grain of wheat there arises a stalk, so a certain power [*logos*] is implanted in the body, which is not destroyed, and from which the body is raised up in incorruption" (ANF 4:553).

6. Methodius of Olympus does not see how the "form" could be separated from the "flesh," just as he does not see how the form could be separated from the marble of a statue. When the flesh is destroyed, the form is also destroyed. It is therefore inconsistent to say that the form is raised without any change while the body (το σόμα) in which the form is imprinted is destroyed. After the observance that the form passes into a spiritual body, Methodius says, "Therefore, it is necessary to confess that the very same form as at first does not arise, from its being changed and corrupted with the flesh (τῆ σαρκί). For although it be changed into a spiritual body, that will not be properly the original substance, but a certain resemblance of it, fashioned in an ethereal body. If, however, it is not the same form, nor yet the body which arises, then it is another in the place of the first" (*Ex libro de resurrectione*, PG 18:322; ET *Discourse on the Resurrection*, ANF 6:376).

7. Farges, *Les idées morales*, 207.

8. Christos Androutsos, *Dogmatics of the Eastern Orthodox Churches*, Romanian ed., 468. Bulgakov supports this theory as well in his *Eucharistic Dogma*. And Nicholas Lossky too says, "Physical death is only a partial loss of the body. Only the peripheral body is lost, but the central body, i.e. activities in space, performed by the central agent or the human ego itself, repulsions, attractions, creations of qualities that can be felt, continue . . . Having lost his body, i.e. the connection with one group of allies, he is able to start building for himself a new body, i.e. to acquire for himself new allies" ("The Resurrection of the Body," in *The Anglican Theological Review* 31, no. 2 [Apr. 1949], 71–82, at 75). P. Y. Svetlov says the same thing in his *Apologetical Exposition of Orthodox Christian Doctrine*, 2 vols. (Kiev, 1898).

9. Certain Catholic theologians say it may be possible that in the resurrected body there will not be even one molecule from the earthly body. Farges says, "It is possible that [the body] might not have a single molecule from those which composed it on earth. Most theologians, however, believe that in order to be in conformity with the spirit of tradition and of the Church, a portion of the elements that composed the earthly body must be found in the resurrected body" (*Les idées morales*, 196). It seems that the Catholic Church's doctrine requires only a numerical and individual identity. M. l'abbé Gaudel (*Cours de théologie dogmatique*, 1937–38, p. 125) quotes Cardinal L. Billot in this sense: "It would seem sufficient to draw the numerical identity from the soul" (*Quaestiones de novissimis*, 13:162). The Holy Fathers affirm a certain identity of the earthly body's matter with the post-resurrectional body's matter. Methodius of Olympus maintains that all the earthly body's matter will reoccur in the risen body (Farges, *Les*

idées morales). But it is difficult to accept this. One must accept only that the earthly body's matter will determine that of the risen body's matter to a certain extent. Gregory of Nyssa says only that bodies will not disappear entirely, but they will dissolve into their elements, and if God was able in the beginning to make the human body out of nothing, so much easier will it be for Him to raise up it from the existing elements (*Oration 3 on Christ's Resurrection*, PG 46:673).

10. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that "every soul will recognize its particular body like a garment and will dwell in it again, distinguishing it unmistakably from a multitude of bodies of the same kind. Think of all the souls and bodies from Adam as a great multitude of demolished houses whose owners return from a long trip, and everything happens wondrously: the house's rebuilding is not delayed, and the owner does not wander in the open air looking for his own belongings, but he goes there as a dove goes to its nest, even if there are many others around him who appear similarly" (*Oration 3 on Christ's Resurrection*, PG 46:660–61). Properly speaking, through the power of the risen Christ found in it, the soul rebuilds the body that is proper to it and regards it as its own.

11. L'abbé Gaudel, *Cours de théologie*, 125.

12. *The Resurrection of the Body*, 76.

13. *Value and Being* [in Russian] (Paris: YMCA Press, 1931), 57f.

14. *The Resurrection of the Body*, 78.

15. Ibid., 76.

16. Ibid.

17. *De Mortuis* (PG 46:532), in ibid., 79.

18. Ibid., 80.

19. Ibid., 76.

20. Ibid., 77.

21. Ibid., 76.

22. Ibid., 81.

23. Eriugena, *De divisione naturae* 5.20, quoted in ibid., 78. According to Eriugena (*De divisione naturae*, 5.20 and 5.38), the Lord's body after the Resurrection (to which spiritualized bodies are similar) and our resurrected bodies will not be limited by material forms, but will be like angelic bodies.

24. Christianity aspires—says Berdyaev—to identifying the individual with the community's ideals, to his enrichment with all the spiritual content of humanity, to "encompassing the wholeness of plenitude in the individual form" ("Das Problem der Kirche," in *Kirche, Staat und Mensch*, 1937, p. 91). This ideal will be fully realized in the life to come.

25. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 33 on First Corinthians* (PG 41:280).

26. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 312.

27. "The angelic assembly is united in a polyhypostatic multitude, after the image of the Holy Trinity, not through the unity of its nature, which is absent for lack of this very nature, but exclusively through love, above all for God, and then reciprocal love one for another. The angelic assembly is

united in the fusion of personal reciprocal love in which the angelic hypostasis seemingly dies for itself in order to resurrect and live in *the assembly*, in a multi-one, collective, pan-angelic I. This assembly of pan-angelic love will become the form of pan-human love after all humanity stops being an abstract intelligible concept, but it will be an immediate reality when people stop being born and dying, 'being children of the resurrection' (Luke 20:36)" (Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 94). We do not believe that angels lack a certain nature, for there exists no hypostasis without nature. Even within the Holy Trinity there is a nature. What may be true in this is that personhood, freedom, and voluntary love have predominance.

28. [The Romanian term for "world" is *lume*, from the Latin *lūmen*. – trans.]

29. "Wishing to create man, the Creator of all did not bring him into existence as an animal to be despised, but showed him as the most honorable of all and as the king of creation under the heavens. Wishing this and making him wise and in the image of God, and endowing him with much blessing, is it with this thought that He brought him into existence, that once he is born he may disappear and suffer total destruction? But then He would have thwarted the purpose, and it would be undignified for us to attribute such a thought to God. He would be like children who build earnestly and then tear down their work, and thus their thought does not look toward any useful end. But when sin happened, this deprived him of immortality as punishment. Then when the source of goodness and love toward mankind turned to the work of His hands, He endowed it with wisdom and knowledge, He who willed to renew us in the original state" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration 3 on Christ's Resurrection*, PG 46:661).

30. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 216.

31. "Resurrection, bringing back to life, restoration, and all names of this kind remind the person who listens to think about the body of corruption. For the soul, regarded in itself, will not rise because it will not die; for it is incorruptible and nonperishing. Being incorruptible, it has mortal man as partner in its deeds. Therefore, upon giving account before the righteous judge, the soul will again dwell as a co-worker so as to receive together with [the body] the punishments or the honors. To focus our words, let us look at it this way: What do we call man? Both, or only one? Certainly, the pair of the two is what characterizes man. But since the things are done in common, do you limit your judgment to the soul only?" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration 3 on Christ's Resurrection*, PG 46:676).

32. Theophanes Cerameus (*Homily 59*, PG 132:1037, 1040) says that the cloud that overshadowed the Lord on Tabor was the Holy Spirit, like the cloud in which the Lord ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) and on which He will come at the last judgment (Matt 24:30). And he sees the Lord's transfigured body foreshadowed in the gentle breeze in which God appeared to Elijah (3 Kgdms 19:12), because God Himself is "gentle and pure, and not welcoming the density of sin," that is, He becomes purely light under the rays of His divinity, which is infinitely higher than our sun (PG 132:1040–41).

33. Ibid., 1048.

34. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Antirrhetica* 41, in Jean-Baptiste Pitra, *Spicilegium solesmense* (Paris, 1852), 1:433.

35. Pavel Florensky says, "The body is something whole, something individual, something special. This is not the place to prove that individuality permeates every organ of the body, and that there is thus some connection (a connection that is completely certain, though one that may be ungraspable by the formulas of characterology as a science), some correspondence, between the subtlest features of the structure of the organs and the smallest windings of personal character. The features of the face; the shape of the cranium; the lines of the palms and feet; the shape of the hands and fingers; the timbre of the voice, which expresses the subtlest features in the structure of the voice organs; handwriting, which embodies the subtlest features of muscle contractions; taste and idiosyncrasies, which show precisely what materials and stimuli the particular organism requires, i.e., what it lacks, and so on and so forth—here, everywhere behind impersonal matter a unified person looks at us. This unity is manifested everywhere in the body" (*The Pillar and Ground*, 193–94).

36. In this sense St. Gregory of Nyssa mentions St. Paul's words "For no man ever hates his own flesh" (Eph 5:29), and he adds, "But one must love the purified body, not the dross that is to be discarded" (*De mortuis*, PG 46:532). Pavel Florensky says that the ascetic understands like no one else the beauty and sanctity of marriage: "God and the world, spirit and flesh, virginity and marriage are antinomic with respect to each other, are in a mutual relation of thesis and antithesis . . . As a person is spiritualized, the beauty of one or the other side of the antinomy is emphasized in the consciousness" (*The Pillar and Ground*, 218).

37. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 230.

38. *De mortuis* (PG 46:529–32).

39. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:145–49); ET Roth, 113–14.

40. *De mortuis* (PG 46:532–33).

41. Ibid., 536.

42. *Ambigua* (PG 91:1113); ET Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 100–1.

43. *Ambigua* (PG 91:1193–96); ET Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 147.

44. Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 91.

45. Ibid., 91–93.

46. Ibid., 95.

47. J. Rivière, "Jugement," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 8:1820.

48. *De fide orthodoxa* (PG 94:1228); ET Chase, *An Exact Exposition*, 406.

49. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses*, trans. Carmino J. deCatanzaro, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 249.

50. Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 6.

51. This is how A. M. Tuberovsky renders Nesmelov's conception in the article "The Ideology of Christ's Resurrection: The Conception of V. I. Nesmelov" [in Romanian], *Hristianin* 9 (March 1915): 519.

52. V. I. Nesmelov, *The Science of Man* [in Russian], 2 vols. (Kazan, 1905–6), 2:349.

53. Ibid., 353.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 354.

57. Tuberovsky, "The Ideology of Christ's Resurrection," 522.

58. *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, bk. 6 (PG 73:1048).

59. Ibid., 1046D.

Chapter 9

Universal Judgment

1. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 14* (PG 77:1081).

2. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:380D).

3. Ibid., 380D–381A.

4. Ibid., 385.

5. Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 3.

6. *Homily 13: On the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent* (PG 151:164).

7. R. P. Félix, *Le châtiment*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1898), 187–88, quoted in Rivière, "Jugement," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 8:1821.

8. St. John of Damascus, *De iis qui in fide dormierunt* (PG 95:276A).

9. Quoted in ibid., 276B.

10. Quoted in ibid., 276C.

11. Ibid., 253B.

12. Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 18f.

13. Rivière, "Jugement," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 8:1813.

14. Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 64.

15. *Epistle 1* (PG 91:381); see also *Epistle 4* (PG 91:416).

16. "Carefully examining [the supremely good things], we reflect upon the way to tread toward them and upon what they are for us. For we know that there is a multitude of invisible witnesses of what we do and think, [witnesses] who are present and do not look solely at appearances but at the soul itself, and there they test what is hidden in the heart" (*Epistle 1*, PG 91:380).

17. "Angels are not all-knowing and almighty. They did not know fully the mystery of divine incarnation, and only learned about it through the church (Ephesians 3:10); consequently they did not thoroughly comprehend the hidden meaning of universal history and in particular, of Old Testament history which is wholly understood only by way of the divine incarnation. According to the Church's testimony in her sacred hymnody they *were astonished* at the Theotokos's entrance into the temple and her honorable Dormition, as well as at the ascension from earth into heaven. But inasmuch as their knowledge is limited, so too is their action. Of course,

their wisdom and knowledge, in conformity with the nature of the bodiless spirits and their sanctity, immeasurably exceeds human powers (although one must not forget that their knowledge of our world occurs as it were from the outside and in that respect it characteristically proves to be limited in comparison even with human knowledge) . . . Angels do not have God's omniscience and their comprehension of what unfolds in a worldly process remains creaturely-limited. But this knowledge is essentially other than human knowledge . . . Therefore angels contemplate the course of world life from the heights of supernal being. But this contemplation does not remain idle or passive. Angels took part as servants of God in the good ordering of this world in all its parts and principles" (Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, 64–65).

Chapter 10

The Life Eternal

1. *To Thalassius 22* (PG 90:321); ET Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 118.

2. *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (PG 44:885D–888A); ET McCambley, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 127–28.

3. Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 317.

4. Ibid., 319.

5. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 196.

6. St. John of Damascus, *De duabus voluntatibus* (PG 95:186).

7. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 197.

8. Ibid., 198.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily 7 on the Beatitudes* (PG 44:1289A–92B), quoted in ibid.

12. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 198.

13. Ibid., 199.

14. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:93A); ET Roth, 79.

15. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:89B–C); ET Roth, 77.

16. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:96A); ET Roth, 80.

17. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:93C); ET Roth, 80.

18. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 199, quoting St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46:93B).

19. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 201.

20. St. Gregory of Nyssa, PG 45:792D, quoted in Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 200–1.

21. St. Gregory of Nyssa, PG 46:797A, quoted in Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 201.

22. Idem, *The Life of Moses* (PG 44:301C); ET Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Life of Moses*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 31.

23. Idem, *Against Eunomius* (PG 45:340D), quoted in Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 201.

24. Idem, *The Life of Moses* (PG 44:301C); ET Malherbe, 31.

25. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 201.

26. Ibid.

27. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (PG 44:941C); ET McCambley, 162.

28. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté*, 201. The sequence of quotations in these points (notes 14–28) was formulated by Gaïth, based on the texts from St. Gregory of Nyssa that are cited above.

29. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* (PG 44:184D).

30. "Since man has, as soon as he came into existence, caused his own origin to be behind him . . . persistently seeking his final goal, he reaches his origin" (*To Thalassius 59*, PG 90:613).

31. *To Thalassius 65* (PG 90:757).

32. Olivier Clément, "Notes sur le temps," in *Messager de l'Exarchat du Patriarche Russe en Europe Occidentale* 25, no. 1 (1957): 140.

33. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (PG 44:941B–C); ET McCambley, 162.

34. *To Thalassius 65* (PG 90:760).

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 757.

37. Ibid., 760.

38. Ibid. St. Symeon the New Theologian says that the end of movement in God is endless, or its perfection is always moving toward perfection. For the end of movement at the end of the world coincides with the beginning of perfection without end (*The Discourses*, trans. deCatanzaro, 249).

39. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1392D).

40. Ibid.

41. "Who will [be able to] endure this roaring Tartarus, the boiling at the bottom of its abyss?" (idem, *Epistle 1*, PG 91:381).

42. "Who—and this is the most serious of all these evils—will not dread seeing the face of God, who is gentle by nature and the friend of man, turn away, along with His compassion? Every creature turns away, with horror and repulsion, before these unhappy ones who are pierced by such evils that earn them their hateful judgment; and [creation] is disgusted, not without reason, with those who force God to manifest Himself in this way, He who by nature is good and loving" (ibid.).

43. Sartre's thoughts on the nothingness that is fixed in being, as in a shell, are suggestive.

44. Ferdinand Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten* (Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1921), 103f.

45. Ibid., 81.

46. *Homily 14* (PG 77:1080–81).